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EVOLUTION OF RELIEF IN PENNSYLVANIA

By Blanche J. Paget

INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL SETTING

Page

Colonial Roots 1
The Poor We Brought With Us 3
Our Industrialization 4
Exploitation of Resources 5
  Lumber 5
  Land 6
  Minerals 6
  Human Resources 7

PROGRESS THROUGH TRIAL

Before Organized Charities 12
  1785-99 12
  1808-09 13
  1818-21 13
  1825-29 14

Stumbling Toward Organization 14
  First Effort to Organize Charity 14
  Survey of Unemployment a Century Ago 16
  Too Many Charities (1837-43) 19
  Trend Toward Institutional Care 20
  Paper Plan for Organizing Public and Private Relief 20
  Growing Pains 21
    1854-55 22
    1857-58 22

Crisis and Crystallization 23
  After the Civil War (1866-67) 23
    1873-78 23
  Charity Organization from Chaos 27
  Depression of 1883-85 30
  The Stultification of Public Outdoor Relief 33
  The Days of Coxey's Army 1892-97 37

From Symptoms to Causes 42
  Deepening Insight 42
  Rise of Social Settlements 44
  A Depression With Improvements (1907-08) 46

Milestones 47
  International Conference on Unemployment 47
  Pittsburgh Survey 47
  First White House Conference on Child Welfare 48
  Founding of Public Charities Association of Pennsylvania 48
  Mothers' Assistance 48

WAR AND AFTER

Page

Pre-War Depression (1914-15) 50
Post-War Depression (1920-22) 52
How Urban Centers Met Unemployment 53
Relief in the Counties 55
Losses of Labor 55

Post-War Gains 56
Establishment of State Department of Welfare 56
Growth of Community Chests 57

The Days of Our Prosperity 57
Unemployment 57
Rising Relief Costs 59
Unpreparedness 60

The Culmination 64
Committees 64
Industrial Conditions in 1931 65
Exhaustion of Credit 66
Decline of Living Standards 66
Health 67
Resistance to Charity 68
Private Relief 69
Public Relief 70

CONCLUSION

Page

War-Time Depression (1914-18) 59
Post-War Depression (1920-22) 59
How Lloyds Centers Has Unemployment 59
Relief In the Counties 59
Lowers of Labor 59

Post-War Gains 34
Establishment of Trade Departments of Railways 34
Growth of Community Wants 37

The Hope of Our Prosperity 37
Unemployment 39
Rising Relief Costs 39
Unpreparedness 40

The Culmination 44
Committees 44
Industrial Conditions in 1921 45
Exhaustion of Credit 46
Decline of Living Standards 46
Wealth 47
Heartsore to Charity 47
Private Relief 48
Public Relief 50

CONCLUSION

EVOLUTION OF RELIEF IN PENNSYLVANIA

INTRODUCTION

It is known that from our earliest days as a nation we have had depressions. It is not so well known that from Colonial times, and even during those peaks of prosperity which in graphs are so suggestive of the crest of a wave, we have had unemployment. Seasonal work, migrant labor, marginal workers and slums are problems as old as the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania was transformed from a sylvan wilderness into a roaring center of industry in the short space of one hundred years. During this period of enormous expansion, of hectic building, of lively interchange of goods and money, a few people made vast fortunes and wielded vast power; some hundreds held responsible positions at good salaries and sent their children to college; thousands toiled in the scorching heat of iron furnaces, crawled through dark tunnels breathing coal dust, and performed other obscure and dangerous tasks for wages that enabled them to provide the bare necessities for their families so long as employment was steady and no serious sickness or other misfortune overtook them. The unskilled laborer never earned enough in the best of times to provide the minimum estimated by unimpeachable authorities, such as the United States Department of Labor, to be essential to "health and decency." When unemployment or misfortune overtook him, he fell at once below the poverty line.

The long fight of the trade unions brought relief from the worst evils, such as the twelve hour shift in the steel mills, but, except in certain especially skilled and well-organized trades such as that of the Railroad Brotherhoods, it could do nothing about unemployment and not a great deal

REGULATION OF POLICE IN PENNSYLVANIA

about wages, since most of the gains made by labor were lost in each succeeding depression.

The World War brought higher wages (and prices) and a brief respite from unemployment. It brought also over expansion of industry, technological unemployment on a larger scale, and high pressure salesmanship to induce the worker to spend money he had not received to purchase the products of his excessive industry through installment buying.

The War industries also increased the congestion in our cities. In addition to the two great aggregations of population in either end, Pennsylvania has more cities of over 50,000 than any other state. They are built around factories. The majority of their inhabitants live in solid rows of dingy houses. The children play in the street, their feet rarely touching the good earth.

We are more humane and more intelligent in relieving the poor than our forebears, but when it comes to depressions the record is a sorry one. We have never really met depressions, we have only muddled through them. This has been due partly to an ill-judged optimism. Delusions as to the magic power of "confidence" and the belief that prosperity is just ahead were not born yesterday, but are characteristic of every such crisis.

It is not quite just to say that those engaged in social welfare have failed entirely to meet depressions; they have met them -- after the event. The history of relief, when viewed in relation to our business cycles, reveals that each major depression has been followed by noteworthy advances in social welfare. Until the present depression, this progress was chiefly in the field of private philanthropy.

The outstanding development during the last five years has been the establishment of public, nation-wide machinery for relieving human distress

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on a scale somewhat commensurate with our resources and the needs to be met. Chaotic conditions, bad administration of local poor relief, and the inadequacy of local resources, both public and private, to cope with the colossal problems of dependency and unemployment created by our industrial civilization, made this step inevitable. Until these problems are satisfactorily solved, relief must go on. The only question is, in what form?

Forty years ago a wise man, whom social workers are proud to claim as one of the founders of their profession, said:

> "The charities of a given locality at a certain stage of development are a chaos, a patchwork of survivals, or products of contending political, religious, and medical factions; a curious compound in which there is a strong ingredient of ignorance perpetuated by heedlessness.
>
> "Even far reaching systems of State care are established with superficial knowledge of the needs of the class to be provided for, and with no consideration for their ultimate results. Busy legislators pass laws regarding charities heedlessly or heedlessly refuse to pass them."*

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* Warner, Amos G., American Charities, Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, New York City, 1894. p. 423.

I HISTORICAL SETTING

Colonial Roots

When those first English Quakers came to Pennsylvania 150 years ago, they found a country clothed from water's edge to the crown of the Alleghenies in a garment of primeval forests, well watered, with a long growing season and a milder climate than New England.

The site chosen for the first settlement was a narrow coastal plain. The English built their manor houses and little towns along the Delaware from New Castle to Trenton, while a group of well-born Welsh Quakers was granted the land which rises west of the Schuylkill into a wild, hilly region. Here their place names and their descendents may be found today in the opulent suburbs of Philadelphia. The English and Welsh developed trade, foreign commerce and ship building, as well as agriculture.

A band of Germans, attracted by Penn's promise of religious freedom, founded Germantown, bringing skilled artisans who laid the foundations of the textile industry and made "Germantown goods" famous throughout the colonies. They built the first paper mill, set up printing presses and began to print Bibles. Others pushed west and settled in a limestone tract of unrivaled fertility, the heart of which is now Lancaster County. Later, successive waves of German migration brought hosts of peasants, chiefly of the Reformed Church or Lutheran faith, who took possession of much of the most desirable farm land of the great valleys, frequently buying it from Scotch-Irish settlers who had preceded them, exhausted the soil and wished to move further west. The Germans conserved the soil, left tracts of woodland when clearing, and planted orchards.

About the year 1718 the Scotch-Irish began to lead the van in the conquest of the wilderness. They settled in the Cumberland Valley, "Gateway to the West," and then pushed on across the mountains to the southwestern corner of the State. Scorning Penn's peaceful methods of dealing with Indians, they staged a contest for possession of that strategic bit of Earth known as "the Pittsburgh Area" which, fomented by the French, was to last a generation. Although they were given to exhausting the soil and then moving to pastures new, it is said that the Scotch-Irish built log school houses before they built barns. Pittsburgh proved to be the precise point at which soft coal and iron could meet most cheaply for the production of the necessary "capital goods" which were to mechanize all industry. The Scotch-Irish, whose forebears wrested the area from the Indians, had just the right qualities to take advantage of these unusual opportunities.

Immigrants from the north of Europe and the British Isles poured into Pennsylvania in ever increasing numbers. Because Pennsylvania was the one colony allowing complete religious freedom, these included many sects. Via the Colony of Georgia came the Moravians to the Lehigh Valley. On the site where the great Bethlehem Steel Corporation later rose to power, they founded a communistic colony which endured for twenty years. The town of Bethlehem had grist mills, potteries and textile mills and its crafts embraced thirty occupations.

In the year 1762 settlers from Connecticut, which claimed that its territory extended west to the Pacific, began to move into the beautiful Wyoming Valley along the upper reaches of the Susquehanna. These Yankees brought with them a peculiarly strong attachment to local self-government, which may have some connection with the fact that, in this section of Pennsylvania are many of the 15 counties which still cling to the old township

and borough system of poor relief.

In 1750 Benjamin Franklin estimated that the population of Pennsylvania, exclusive of Indians, was composed of about one third English, one third German and one third Welsh, Scotch-Irish, Irish, Huguenots and the descendants of those Swedish and Dutch settlers who preceded the English. These were the elements upon which Pennsylvania was founded and which have shaped its industrial and political life.

The Poor We Brought with Us

Various elements of the population, even at that early day, began to constitute a relief problem. The more well-to-do colonists brought over many indentured servants who had sold themselves for a term of years into virtual slavery in order to reach the new world. The more unruly of these escaped from their masters and, being without means, became a problem to the authorities. Later, importing laborers and children to be sold in this way became a regular business which continued even into the nineteenth century, and England took to deporting her criminals to the colonies to get rid of them. Thus the seaboard counties early acquired a large dependent population. We would doubtless see in these "paupers" cases for physical or vocational rehabilitation, for resettlement or for care in specialized institutions. To the Colonial authorities most of them seemed lazy reprobates to be punished by confinement in "workhouses" or by semi-starvation methods of care which kept whole families at the pauper level for generations.

We brought with us, also, certain feudal attitudes toward the laborer. Co-existent with a sincere belief in the ideal expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution was an assumption that the laborer existed for the benefit of his master. This has carried over into industry. We must have surplus labor because industry requires it. Too little thought

has been given to the problem of how the surplus laborer is to exist when not needed.

Our Industrialization

With the aid of skilled craftsmen and the indenture and apprentice system, industries developed rapidly in Pennsylvania, but on a small scale. Potteries, brick yards, quarries, tanneries, boot and hat factories, saw-mills and grist mills flourished. Glass was first made in the Monongahela Valley in 1757. As early as 1716 iron was smelted at Pottstown in a crude furnace, using wood charcoal. Readily accessible deposits of iron ore were discovered in many places, one of the richest in the world in Lebanon County. Primitive melting works and forges sprang up in Pittsburgh and on other sites now occupied by great steel plants. The subsidiary industry of charcoal burning utilized the wood that had hitherto been a waste product incident to clearing the land. During the Revolution Pennsylvania, dedicated by its founder to peace, took the lead in furnishing munitions. Franklin's invention of the stove gave the iron industry another boost. However, on a wood charcoal basis, large scale production of iron and steel, as measured today, was impossible.

The problem of transportation was solved in early days by turnpikes and by the construction of a network of canals. Between 1820 and 1840, the Commonwealth constructed over 750 miles of canals at a cost of some $50,000,000. Even the Alleghenies were surmounted, with the timely aid of steam, by means of the Canal and Portage Railroad connecting Hollidaysburg, on the Juniata, with Johnstown on the Conemaugh. This started Johnstown on its career and boomed Pittsburgh as a transfer point for goods bound down the Ohio and Mississippi. Then came the railroads. By the end of the Fifties they were ready to take over transportation. The canals were competitors offering cheaper

transportation. By various manipulations the railroad companies secured possession of most of the important water ways and allowed them to go to ruin.

The momentous substitution of coke for wood charcoal in iron smelting in 1845 ushered the industrial age into Pennsylvania. The speed with which the State was transformed into the industrial hub of the nation was accelerated, first by the Civil War and then by the Centennial Exposition, which stimulated tremendously the development of the infant inventions there displayed.

Exploitation of Resources

Gary Van Kleeck, speaking specifically of the waste of coal, has said: "Thus over development of this non-restorable natural resource results in irretrievable, continuous loss to the people. Such continuous loss undermines standards of living, which obviously depend in the first instance upon the efficiency with which the nation's natural resources are utilized . . ."

Lumber. The first large scale attack upon the resources of Pennsylvania was the lumber industry, for which the rivers and the brawny muscles of lumber jacks furnished the power. Early in the eighteen hundreds, all the best land having been cleared, lumber was increasingly in demand. The making of axes became a major occupation. Armed with these, an army of young pioneers chopped their way farther and farther up the tributaries of the great rivers until the very mountain sides were denuded. By 1880 it was over -- the forests were practically gone, leaving thousands of acres of "cut-over land," some of which was not to be reforested until attacked by another army, the young CCC workers of the nineteen

thirties. The lumber industry centered on the Susquehanna at Williamsport and Lock Haven and great fortunes were founded on it. Its demise left "stranded communities," most of them on land unfit for subsistence farming, but in the larger centers new industries quickly took its place.

Land The methods of the first colonists were conditioned by the necessity for survival, but the way in which they dealt with the game and land resources which they found was deplorable. In Pennsylvania, as in other parts of the country, slaughter for the most trifling gain, such as 25¢ for an animal hide, or for the mere joy of the hunt, went on at a rate that soon eliminated hunting as a source of livelihood.

The land was treated with equal disregard for the future, except by the sturdy Germans. Shortage of labor and plentiful land made it cheaper to abandon a field when exhausted, leaving it to the forces of erosion, and clearing another. Little was known of crop rotation or treatment of the soil and many farms were exhausted through ignorance. The foundation of State College in 1855 and the diffusion of information by the State Department of Agriculture has done much to check and something to repair the waste that went on for a hundred and fifty years.

Since 1897, when the first forest preserve was set aside by the State, the task of conserving the forests which remain and of reforestation has gone steadily forward, but immense tracts of submarginal land, unfit for farming, have still to be reclaimed and those who are attempting to make a living from such land to be rescued. The task of checking the loss of fertile soil through erosion has but recently received recognition and study.

Minerals As early as 1768 a blacksmith at Wilkes-Barre experimented with anthracite and found it an excellent fuel, after which other

blacksmiths in the neighborhood used it in their forges. Not until about 1810 was an attempt made to market it for household use. Soon thereafter barges of marketable lumber laden with anthracite were being floated down the Lehigh and Schuylkill to the settlements.

Although the presence of bituminous coal near the blasting furnaces of young Pittsburgh had been known for many years, its commercial use coincided with the advent of the railroad. The use of coal as a fuel made railroads efficient and quantity production of rails and rolling stock practical. The discovery of oil and gas quickly followed. With unlimited cheap fuel and iron ore at hand, quantity production, not only of iron and steel "consumer's goods," but of machines for the mechanization of other industries, became possible, with the prospect of immense profits for those who first secured possession of the primary resources and the opportunities they represented.

The struggle for possession of these riches was accompanied by a shocking loss of irreplaceable resources. Too many mines were opened and coal was, and still is, mined in the most wasteful manner, frequently with slight regard for human safety; enough oil flowed from the ground in a few years to have served for a generation if properly conserved, and millions of feet of gas shot into the air. From lack of knowledge and indifference, immensely valuable by-products were lost in the making of coke, refining of oil and other processes.

Human Resources The process of exploiting the natural resources of Pennsylvania was furthered by the use of cheap labor. In the days of small establishments and home work, indentured servants and apprentices, many of them children, helped to amass modest fortunes for the owners, nor was slave labor unknown. As the introduction of machinery took such tasks

as spinning and weaving out of the homes and reduced the number of hands and the skill required, not only women but little children were employed in factories for incredibly long hours, while sweatshop labor flourished among seamstresses and other home workers.

When indentured labor became unprofitable because of the expense of maintenance during times of slack employment, and when the lure of gold and free land had swept the more adventurous descendants of the original pioneers farther west, the rising "captains of industry" built their railroads and manned their mines, steel plants, glass factories and other mills with Irish, Scandinavian, Austro-Hungarian, Italian and Slav laborers who poured into the port of Philadelphia in an ever-increasing torrent which reached its climax between 1890 and 1910. Glad to escape intolerable conditions at home, they packed the slums of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and filled the desolate company mining camps, content with wages below the prevailing rate so long as employment was steady. Many of them came as "contract labor," a lineal descendant of the indenture system, and were virtual serfs until they had worked out their passage. They belonged to the least privileged classes of southern Europe and advantage was taken of their ignorance, not only by employers, but by "padrones" of their own race who made large sums by recruiting them and running the labor camps in which they lived. Besides these abuses, the lack of any agency for study and classification of incoming foreigners, coupled with their ignorance of conditions, resulted in dissipation of energy, loss of courage and faith in American institutions, and incalculable waste of talent and previous skills. The contract system was outlawed in 1885 through the efforts of the Knights of Labor, but continued under cover for some time thereafter. By 1900, over 1,300,000 foreign born were within the borders of Pennsylvania besides an

even larger number born in this State of foreign parentage. The great majority of them were industrial workers.

Although the World War and new immigration laws reduced the influx of foreign born to a mere trickle, our cities continued to grow through the shift of population from rural areas to urban centers. This tide set in strongly when the mechanization of industry and agriculture coincided with the exhaustion of free land in the West. In 1890, when the process had been going on for some time, the urban population of Pennsylvania constituted 48.6 per cent of the whole. By 1930, 67.8 per cent of the people lived in towns and cities and were largely dependent upon manufacturing, mining, trade and transportation. In the same period the population of the State had nearly doubled.

The World War also gave impetus to an influx of Negroes from the South, attracted by more plentiful jobs and higher wages. In every slump of employment Negroes, with some exceptions, have been the first to be affected and the last to reap the benefit of any improvement, while their average wages are lower than for white laborers and many occupations are closed to them.

It is a commonplace that technological improvements have continually replaced man power by machinery and reduced the number of workers needed. In addition, competition and overproduction have brought disaster upon some industries, notably coal mining. Pennsylvania has been peculiarly affected by the resultant labor surplus. In company towns, where workers live in company houses and trade at company stores, it has led to debt slavery defined by the United States Supreme Court as "peonage." In the cities, the competition for jobs has led to lowered wages and lowered purchasing power, with an increase in malnutrition, overcrowding and the other evils of slums.

Its reaction on industry itself is now well recognized.

In addition to slums there have been, throughout our industrial development, instances of the "stranded communities" whose existence is now causing such concern. These have been due to exhaustion of resources, as in the lumber industry and some mining and oil towns; to over-exploitation and consequent stagnation, as in the coal industry; to the strangling of small plants by large concerns, as in the case of tanneries, or to removal of an industry to a location more advantageous (for the owner), as in the case of textile mills which have moved South to secure cheaper labor and to save freight charges on raw materials. This is true even of Philadelphia which in 1929 had only 15 per cent more factory workers than in 1899, while the average number of factory wage earners for the country at large increased 91 per cent in the same period.* In the meantime the population of Philadelphia increased 50.8

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* Welch, Emmett H., Employment Trends in Philadelphia, Department of Labor and Industry, Harrisburg, 1933.

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per cent. To a certain extent Philadelphia is a "stranded community."

Meanwhile, the replacement of home preparation and marketing of food by elaborate processing and distribution has resulted in lower prices for farm products and higher cost to consumers. The protests of the milk producers of Pennsylvania in recent years have focused attention upon the anomaly of dairy farmers going bankrupt as a result of what distributors have called "surplus production," while thousands of city families cannot buy milk for their children because of its high price. At the same time the local merchant has been crowded out by the chain stores. Now the manufacture, wholesaling and retailing of "consumers goods" require a

great army of workers who, like factory hands, mill workers and miners, are wholly dependent upon work over the continuous operation of which they have no control. They cannot even, like the farmer, fall back upon subsistence farming when the market for their labor fails.

Before Organized Charities

1785-89. After a short period of prosperity following the Revolutionary War the United States slumped into one of the worst depressions in our early history, lasting from 1785 until about 1789. In fact, not until ten years later were our industries on a stable basis. One response was a wave of migration across the mountains into the fertile lands of Kentucky and Ohio. "The history of western migration shows that wave after wave rolled out upon the great plains as depression followed depression."*

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* Lightner, Otto C., History of Business Depressions, The Northeastern Press, New York City, 1922. p. 143

The lack of organized private relief at this period is evidenced by a provision in the Poor Law of 1771 for the acceptance by overseers or guardians of the poor of gifts and bequests from citizens for the use of the poor. The system of poor relief brought from England by the colonists was first formulated in the reign of Queen Elizabeth to control as well as relieve the multitudes of "landless men" by whom England was overrun, and was punitive in attitude. The seaports such as Philadelphia were clogged with the poorer and less enterprising immigrants, whose ignorance and lack of initiative seemed to justify grudging and meagre poor relief, while unsystematic private giving encouraged begging and pauperism.

The Counties of Lancaster and Chester, being near the seaboard and traversed by a main highway, also suffered from a large floating population. It may not be without significance that in 1798, these counties petitioned the legislature for permission to establish county unit poor

districts, thus distributing the burdens of poor relief more equitably and escaping the vexations of determining residence between townships.

1808-09. Prior to 1808 the United States had expanded her shipping and foreign trade at an unprecedented rate, but in that year the war between France and England resulted in an embargo on our shipping. In an article written at this time our once busy seaports are described as absolutely stagnant. The greatest sufferers were the sailors, 30,000 of whom were estimated to be out of work. It was thought that in all 100,000 people were unemployed for a year, an enormous army compared to the population of the seaboard states at that time. Lumbermen and fishermen were reduced to beggary, and farmers offered their lands for sale. In New York the depression caused 120 bankruptcies and threw 1800 debtors into prison. The city was likened to a graveyard.

Apparently this distress was relieved chiefly by the overseers of the poor and by individual almsgiving, although the organization in 1815 of the "Female Society of Philadelphia for the Relief and Employment of the Poor" may have been a successor to earlier efforts.

In 1814 there was a dip in production with accompanying unemployment, followed by a short respite.

1818-21. From 1818 to 1821 there followed such a severe depression that in 1819 the Legislature of Pennsylvania made an inquiry into conditions. Its committee reported: (1) ruinous sacrifices of landed property at sheriff's sales; (2) forced sales of household goods, farming stock and utensils sold at prices below cost; (3) numerous bankruptcies; (4) general scarcity of money and usurious rates of interest; (5) general suspension of manufacturing and labor; (6) cessation of the circulation of commodities;

(7) the prisons overflowing with debtors.

There is no indication that the Legislature either diagnosed or prescribed for this condition, or that any systematic efforts were made to relieve the sufferers. In Philadelphia, however, the "Indigent and Single Women's Society," which endured for many years, was organized and doubtless other similar but more ephemeral agencies of this nature were formed. It is obvious that a necessity for "categorical relief" to certain classes, especially widows, had been recognized. The inclusion of "single women" is significant of the difficulty experienced by unattached women in earning a living at that time.

1825-29. Business cycle charts show depressed conditions again from 1825 to 1829, but of methods employed to relieve sufferers there is scant record. Stimulated western migration was undoubtedly one answer.

Stumbling Toward Organization

First Effort to Organize Charity. The extraordinarily severe winter of 1830-31 caused intense suffering among the poor of Philadelphia. At this time a number of societies were formed "acting without much concert and causing much confusion in the administration of charitable work in our goodly City."* The most significant and enduring of these was the Union

* Semi-centennial of the Union Benevolent Association, Report of 1881.

Benevolent Association, organized under the inspiration of David Naismith, a young Scotchman, who was in this country to spread certain new methods then being developed in Scotland under the famous Dr. Chalmers. Its most noteworthy feature was the institution of a district system under central control with "friendly visitors" from the more privileged classes. It is recorded that the movement became very popular and that when a cholera epidemic swept Philadelphia during the year 1832, the visitors "were faith-

ful nurses of the sick." A history issued by the Association fifty years later says: "It was intended to absorb the several other charity organizations which had sprung up, and so prevent the injurious repetition of alms which was becoming a crying evil. It did not accomplish this impossible feat, however. . ."

Some of the causes which the Union Benevolent Association championed sound very curious today, such as "remonstrances against the treatment of chimney sweeps," but some are still live issues. For instance the Association protested "against the gross misuse of the public funds by the Guardians of the Poor." Also: "It has printed remonstrances to employers against inadequate compensation for labor." Certain of its activities were work relief, loans, employment agencies, day nurseries and commissaries.

Unfortunately, the publicity regarding the new society had so stressed service that, when other relief agencies refused to be merged or to place their resources at its service, the Union Benevolent Society found itself short of funds. For when the "lady visitors" went into the homes of the poor, came to know them individually and saw the conditions under which they lived and worked, these good women were horrified to find that a great deal more than advice was needed. They told their tales to the newspapers. In the history of the Society compiled in 1881 the following quotations from "Publications of the day," (presumably 1831) are given:*

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* Exact source not cited.

> "With respect to the habitual idleness of the poor," says the paper, "which is a frequent theme for declamation, with thoughtless and inconsiderate people, it is in a great degree destitute of foundation. That there are idlers among the poor as among the rich no one will doubt, but from repeated investigation I can state that the number bears but a small proportion to the whole body. Is there any occupation ever so severe, ever so degrading, ever so pernicious to

health that does not find persons who gladly seize the opportunity of being employed in it and court it as a favor, no, most certainly! The situation of watchmen and newscarriers exposed to all the vicissitudes of weather, that of hodmen so excessively laborous and dangerous, of coal-heavers so miserably paid, of scavengers so humiliating and uncleanly, are as anxiously sought after, as places of honor and profit are sought after by politicians."

Another publication is quoted as follows:

"Few of our citizens," says a report of that time, 'have any idea of the horrible scenes of misery and wretchedness that prevail in our City. Ignorance of the astounding facts, and the odious tirades against the idleness, intemperance and improvidence of the poor, as if there were none worthy, keep many of the wealthy from contributing to aid benevolent societies to the extent that is absolutely required. . . .

"The earnestness with which the Association disclaims being an almsgiving society looks as if the Managers regard it as a stigma upon it. It would almost appear from this disavowal that there was something immoral or discreditable in almsgiving, of which they found it necessary to clear themselves. This proceeds from a morbid fear of encouraging the idleness of the poor, and a desire to compel them to habits of industry and economy. . . This presupposes, what ought to be first proved, that habits of idleness are pretty generally prevalent among the poor. . . Can the charge of idleness be substantiated against poor females when nearly 1,500 have applied weekly to the Provident Society, and received as a favor four shirts per week at 12½ cents? . . .

"Thousands of the worthy and industrious poor of our City are to be found habitually suffering in the winter season from the want of employment alone, and are driven by necessity to seek relief from private charity or from public institutions at a time when they are willing and anxious to labor for their own support."*

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* Report of Union Benevolent Association, Semi-Centennial Anniversary, 1831-81.

Survey of Unemployment a Century Ago. This was a time of great awareness and intense discussion of the problems of poverty, both in England and this country. The reform of the English poor laws in 1834 and the very able Report of the Royal Poor Law Commission which preceded it, as well as the work and writings of Chalmers, were well known here. In a series of "Essays"

written in 1854, entitled "An Appeal to the Wealthy" and addressed to the "Impartial Humane Society of Baltimore" and "The Female Hospitable Society of Philadelphia," Mathew Carey* of Philadelphia gave facts and

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* Mathew Carey fled to this country from Ireland in 1784 to escape persecution for his liberal writings. He was a publisher and writer of note and promoter of civic improvements, the father of Henry Charles Carey, an authority on political economy.

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figures which indicate a very careful study of employment conditions in Pennsylvania.

He attacked the prevalent assumptions -

> "(1) That every man, woman and grown child, able and willing to work may find employment
>
> "(2) That the poor . . . may at all times support themselves . . . and, as a corollary. . .
>
> "(3) That their sufferings . . . chiefly arise from their idleness, their dissipation, and their extravagance
>
> "(4) That taxes for the support of the poor, and aid afforded them by charitable individuals and benevolent societies, are pernicious. . ."

For these erroneous conceptions the "economists" are blamed and especially that English clergyman, Malthus. The writer feels that "far from being surprised that among the poor there are to be found many worthless persons, it appears that the surprise, all things considered, ought to be that there are so few."

The reasons for unemployment listed go far deeper than those given in studies made half a century later. Aside from old age, physical disability and loss of the bread winner, the causes of poverty all hark back to unemployment and low wages. Among them are: (1) changes of fashion, (2) introduction of improved machinery, (3) seasonal work on farms, canals and in factories, (4) a surplus of unskilled laborers, clerks and seam-

stresses, and (5) low wages.

The yearly budget of a canal worker with a wife and two children drawing the average wage of $12 per month is given as follows:

10 months at $10.00	$100.00
2 " " 5.00	10.00
Suppose the wife earns 50¢ per week	26.00
Total	$136.00

Expenses -

Rent, 50¢ per week	$ 26.00
Fuel, 12¢	6.24
Food, 8¢ per day each	87.60
Clothing for 4 persons	40.00
Soap, candles, etc. 6¢ per week	3.12
Washing at the canal, 6½¢ per week	3.25
Total	$166.21
Deficit	30.21

The writer calls attention to the fact that many earn less and many have larger families. Also that there is no provision for sickness, accident or unemployment, and that the allowance for food is probably too low. It does not escape him that factory workers are unsuited for farm work and that many low paid women workers are too old or frail for domestic service. He quotes page after page of first hand testimony as to sweat shop conditions among seamstresses, nor does he hesitate to direct his shafts at a society run by ladies for the employment of the poor which paid similar wages.

A study of outdoor relief in Philadelphia made by the writer revealed that out of 549 "paupers," 390 were over 60 years of age, and 6 were more than 100; 50 were blind; 406 were widows.

In summing up, Mr. Carey states that the operation of public outdoor relief in England was "benignant and salutary" until 1795, "when the floodgates of abuse and corruption were thrown wide open." That an additional reason for the exorbitant increase of the poor rates was "the oppressive

reduction of the price of labor, resulting from great improvements in machinery."

This analysis by a contemporary is significant because the demoralizing effect upon English workers of the practice of supplementing low wages, and supporting the thousands thrown out of employment by the shift from hand labor to machinery, was commonly attributed to outdoor relief itself, and had an immense influence upon our own relief practices -- an influence so lasting as to underlie many of the difficulties encountered in the administration of relief today. Public thinking has not yet been sufficiently clarified to recognize that the loss of morale due to long involuntary idleness, plus sub-standard living conditions, is not an indication of innate indolence and willingness to subsist at public expense. Yet the refutation of this assumption is to be found not only in the findings of psychologists, but in the experience of any man who has not lost his love for creative work through inaction.

A revision of our own poor laws in 1836 left the old English pattern upon which they were based practically unchanged and our Directors of the Poor accepted the prevalent distrust of outdoor relief without much question.

Too Many Charities (1837-43). Passing over various minor reverses, we come to the year 1837 in which the price of flour went to $13 a barrel. In New York, "men deprived of work and in distressed condition started riots. The rumor was current that dealers had combined and the unemployed men were incensed. Several commission houses were broken into. . . The riots were finally stopped by the promise of the merchants to give flour to the poor."*

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* Lightner, Otto C., op. cit., p. 135

In Philadelphia a town meeting was held at which resolutions were passed severely condemning the banks, and in Harrisburg, on July 4, 1837, there was an "anti-bank" convention. It is recorded that the banks issued reassuring statements, but their optimism proved unjustified. The upward swing did not come until 1843.

Numerous Soup Societies were founded in Philadelphia during the depression of 1837-43, and at least one children's home."* All the records point to an intensification of the multiple and indiscriminate giving which the Union Benevolent Association had been powerless to check. Too many charities, acting independently and giving without adequate investigation of need, were as bad as none.

* The Foster Home Association, which now supervises children in their own homes.

Trend Toward Institutional Care. Between 1840 and 1856 the only general relief society of importance to be incorporated in Philadelphia was the Home Missionary Society in 1845. There was a movement toward institutional care of all kinds. Hospitals, children's homes, "Asylums" for "Indigent Widows and Single Women," temporary homes, homes for the education of colored children, and institutions for the reclamation of "fallen females" were founded. The first institutions for the education of the blind, the deaf and the feeble-minded had already made their appearance or did so during this period. Almshouse care became more general throughout the State and sometimes entirely superseded outdoor relief.

Paper Plan for Organizing Public and Private Relief. In 1855, in Philadelphia, an interesting but abortive effort was again made to consolidate all relief by a "Committee for General Organization for the

Relief of the Poor," which was a part of a general movement which led to the organization of Societies for Improving the Condition of the Poor in other cities. This Committee, appointed at a convention, recommended a central application bureau and the merging of all public and private relief under the direction of "Ward Committees of ten citizens" to be chosen by the convention "and thereafter by the Mayor, the Courts or City Councils." The system of districting then used by some private agencies was to be used with "one or more competent visitors in each ward." The central committee, was to be composed of a representative from each ward committee and was to "handle monies appropriated by Councils for outdoor relief" and all trusts for the poor and all collections, and no collections were to be made without its consent.

Work rather than direct relief was to be the rule, and an employment bureau was a part of the plan. Savings accounts were to be handled for the poor. For commodity relief, supplies were to be purchased in bulk, orders on stores being forbidden. Soup houses were banned; also "the custom of gathering broken victuals at residences," which was to be replaced by garbage collection. The committees were to have authority to remove children from unfit homes and children were not to be allowed to engage in street trades without a license.

The committee classified the poor as (1) Aged and infirm, (2) Unemployed, (3) Breadwinner sick or dead, (4) "Vagrants and known beggars and paupers." All this careful planning appears to have come to naught.

Growing Pains. The years from 1840 to 1857 were a time of enormous expansion in the United States. By 1856, 5,648 miles of railroads had been constructed -- seven ninths of the world's trackage. Much of the capital of the country was tied up in developments which could not be expected to

yield a return for a long time to come.

In 1854-55 this exuberant state of prosperity was disturbed by a winter of "hard times." The following year (1856) two charitable associations were founded in Philadelphia. One was "for the Relief and Employment of Poor Women," the other for the "Relief and Employment of the Poor." Evidently unemployment was a pressing problem and these were straws indicative of a coming storm.

In his inaugural address in March, 1856, President Buchanan said: "No nation has ever before been embarrassed by too great a surplus in the treasury." At the same time railroad employees had begun a life and death struggle for better working conditions, shorter hours and higher wages. During a strike on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the militia was called out and a bloody battle ensued, an indication that not all classes of the population were prospering, in spite of the general solvency of the nation.

1857-58. In 1857, the collapse of a life insurance company seems to have brought down the financial structure of the nation like a house of cards. "Bankruptcies were the rule rather than the exception, . . . mill after mill closed, the strongest running only part time . . . prices fell wiping out all profit." Men were warned by New York newspapers to stay where they were known as no work was to be had in the city. It may be assumed that Philadelphia made similar efforts to avoid the care of transients.

In 1857 and 1858 more societies for the "Relief and Employment of the Poor" were organized in Philadelphia. Work Relief was popular, but it would appear that these efforts were local, uncoordinated and entirely unrelated to the economic situation.

The country appears to have made a rapid recovery from the depression of 1857, for:

> "The cotton crop in 1860 reached 4,675,770 bales, nearly a million bales more than in any previous year, great gains had been made in the crops of wheat, corn, and other cereals; the production of anthracite coal in Pennsylvania was nearly 800,000 tons greater than in any preceding year; the output of pig iron was 913,000 tons, or 130,000 more than the average of the six preceding years; exports, including the precious metals, had reached the highest point then known. . . The consuming powers of the people had never been so high, as was proved in particular by the unprecedented demand for sugar and tea; there was but little pauperism, and wealth on the whole was evenly distributed. . ."*

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* Contemporary statement quoted by Lightner, op. cit., p. 148. (Source not given)

However, 179,000 immigrants landed in this country in 1860, many of them at the port of Philadelphia. It seems unlikely that they all found jobs and prosperity, and one wonders what had become of the poor first discovered in the slums of that city by the "lady visitors" in 1831 and rediscovered in 1857 by a less discerning and more complacent public.

Crisis and Crystallization

After the Civil War (1866-67). The period of the Civil War brought the doubtful blessings of war profits in which the working people shared to a certain extent through high wages. So far as Pennsylvania was concerned, the aftermath was not felt until 1866-67, when decreased consumption of textiles due to high prices began to affect employment. The next five years resound with railroad scandals, stock market manipulations for which the term "frenzied finance" was then coined, and the battles of industrial giants fighting for supremacy. The culmination was the terrible depression of 1873-78, with its mass unemployment and unexampled suffering.

Probably it is no mere coincidence that in 1874 there occurred the

first meeting of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections,"

* Since 1917 the National Conference of Social Work.

held in connection with the annual meeting of the American Science Association, and in 1876 the first annual convention of the Directors of the Poor of Pennsylvania. The report of the first National Conference of Charities deals chiefly with the methods used in different cities during the winter of 1873-74 to relieve the widespread unemployment which was thought to be due to "the effects of an irredeemable paper currency" which has a "tendency to make the poor poorer and the rich richer."

Whether or not we accept this explanation of the depression of 1873, we can readily believe the following description of what followed, as given by a minister from New York City:** "When it was seen that the panic

** Hall, The Reverend John, The Winter in New York City, p. 89.

had insured wide distress, there was an immediate rush to increase and enlarge the machinery of benevolence. Soup kitchens, free lodging houses, and charities of every sort sprang up on all sides, each competing for funds and attention. There was complete lack of organization and cooperation. All gave with practically no investigation of need and refused to cooperate in any plan to prevent duplication. In addition, individuals gave freely and indiscriminately, encouraging child beggars, who abounded. The wide advertisement given many of these charities drew to the cities great numbers of migrants.

The meagre information available indicates that similar chaotic giving prevailed in Philadelphia during the depression of 1873-78. The proceedings of the first convention of Directors of the Poor of Pennsylvania (at which Philadelphia was not represented) point to a large increase in

expenditures for relief from public funds throughout the rest of the State, especially in the industrial centers. The counties which sent delegates to this convention were chiefly from the southern and western part of the State, hence were either industrial or rich farming sections. The following information, gleaned from the printed proceeding of this meeting, probably gives a fair idea of the volume of relief given by Pennsylvania poor boards and the varying methods employed in this and succeeding depressions.

Delaware County representatives reported very little distress except in the manufacturing districts, where demands for relief were heavy. About one fifth of poor board expenditures were for outdoor relief. (p. 12) In Chester County, on the other hand, outdoor relief expenditures had been reduced from $8000 per year to $2000. A delegate from that county contended that "paupers" were "more comfortable" in a well conducted almshouse. (p. 10) The Lancaster Poor Board granted outdoor relief only to the aged and infirm; others, including families of unemployed workmen, were sent to the almshouse, which apparently could accommodate them all. (p. 13)

Dauphin County was spending from $10,000 to $15,000 a year in cash relief. Orders were $2.00 to $4.00 per month for a family of five or six. In the winter of 1875-76, 340 families were aided. (p. 8) A Cumberland County representative stated that they gave 50¢ to 75¢ per week to a family. (p. 10) Lebanon County was caring for 200 persons at a cost of $400 per month. (p. 13) The Schuylkill County Poor Board reported spending $11,569 in outdoor relief to 823 persons in one year, and that their almshouse was full. Reports indicated severe unemployment among the miners. (p. 9)

Reports from the Pittsburgh area also showed widespread need. The City of Pittsburgh gave outdoor relief in commodity orders to the amount

of $15,000 the previous year. In Allegheny City cash relief was given in the winter of 1873-74, but the directors felt that many recipients abused it and sent them to the almshouse. Nevertheless, $10,000 was expended in outdoor relief in 1875. (p. 15)

York County officials reported a serious increase in the "tramp evil." In 1873 the Poor Board cared for 1900 transients, in 1874 for 2400 and in 1875 for 3500. (p. 29) Lawrence County also had a large floating population besides increased expenses for outdoor relief. (p. 18) Throughout the regions represented the transient problem was acute, especially along main line railroads. Blair County directors stated that, from December 1875 to May 1876, Altoona City conducted a shelter or "soup house" where an average of 22 tramps were lodged each night. They were required to work in a stone quarry until inclement weather made this impractical because they lacked warm clothing. After one night, each wanderer was sent on his way and "begged meals of the townspeople." The total cost of running this shelter for the winter was $484.47, some of which was offset by the work in the stone quarry. (pp. 20-22) Lancaster County also made use of a quarry. (p. 23)

There was much complaint of increased expenses for medical care and of over-charging by physicians for services rendered charity patients in so-called "emergencies."

Overcrowded almshouses were almost universal and this condition was given by some directors as their chief reason for granting outdoor relief, although they admitted that almshouse care was more costly. A Pittsburgh representative stated that the per capita cost per person of caring for almshouse inmates was $80.00 a year, whereas the average outdoor relief grant to a family was $24.00 per year.* (p. 12)

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* These figures are given for purposes of comparison. The lower cost of living at this time must be considered.

No other depression was reported in such detail in the proceedings of the Association of Directors of the Poor, except for the cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. In fact some of the later depressions were passed over almost in silence, the programs being devoted mainly to set speeches and papers by invited speakers, rather than to an interchange of experiences by the Directors.

Charity Organization from Chaos. Out of the depression of 1874-78, with its chaotic relief giving, came a revival of interest in more efficient methods of handling relief. The wave of enthusiasm originating in England, which had led to the organization of the "Union Benevolent Association" in Philadelphia and later of many other societies "for improving the condition of the poor," had ebbed. The discoveries of those first "lady visitors" and the accompanying recognition of the wrongs of the poor had become lost or stale through repetition, while the relief agencies had bogged down into a routine of petty almsgiving.

In England relief was revivified in 1869 by the formation of the "London Society for Organizing Relief and Suppressing Mendicancy," which used the district system with investigation by experienced visitors. It stressed service rather than relief and rested on the assumption that poverty was a personal matter and could be cured by individual education or by temporary aid. In this same year the State Board of Public Charities was established in Pennsylvania, indicative of an awakening here.

The first fruits of the English movement for organizing charity in America was "The Germantown Relief Society," organized to meet the needs resulting from the depression of 1873-74. It provided that no relief should be given except in emergencies. "For every one worthy or unworthy, there should be the help of active friendliness." The "Philadelphia Society for

Organizing Charity" was founded in June, 1878. One was established in Buffalo at about the same time and other cities followed in rapid succession, but this movement never reached the rural sections and smaller centers in spite of determined efforts by its advocates.

"Not alms but a friend" was the slogan and many of these societies gave no relief at all, concentrating their efforts on organizing the charities of their communities. They undertook to act not only as a clearing house or registration bureau, but through their friendly visitors to sift out those worthy for aid and to "rehabilitate" the unfit and the pauperized. Like their predecessors the new societies met with obstacles. Other relief agencies refused to cooperate in many cases. In some cities no private relief societies existed. Where relief agencies agreed to cooperate, it was found that they were lax as to registration and that the process of obtaining relief through them was slow and cumbersome. Moreover, the public was reluctant to support a movement offering nothing more tangible than service. It proved practically impossible to divorce service from relief. By 1901 all but six of the 75 charity organization societies reporting to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections were giving relief, although many lamented that their original aims had been lost in "mere almsgiving."

In view of this outcome, it was well that the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity gave relief from the start. However, it made the mistake of too great decentralization, and it was years before this initial handicap was overcome.

Those active in the charity organization movement were preoccupied with the necessity for system and the need for re-education of those seeking aid. Like the Directors of the Poor, whose methods they criticized,

they at first accepted the English maxim that the relief client should be less well situated than the poorest laborer, to prevent him from being "pauperized." The corollary was that relief should be temporary and meagre. In the year 1869, a new note was sounded at the annual Conference of Charities and Corrections in a plea for adequate and regular relief."* From this time on private relief agencies began to recognize this principle and live up to it more or less fully.

Perhaps if the visitors of those days had possessed less faith in individual responsibility and more awareness of the social forces arrayed against them, they would have been less successful. As it was, in spite of many failures, they did "rehabilitate" numerous families and individuals. Mary E. Richmond, in 1901, summed up the philosophy of the movement as follows:

> "Charitable cooperation begins and ends in an intimate knowledge of the needs of individual people and in the patient endeavor to make them permanently better off."**

* Mrs. Glendower Evans of Boston, Scientific Charity, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1869. pp. 24-30

** Richmond, Mary E., Needy Families in Their Homes, Report of National Conference of Charities and Correction, 1901. p. 313

Thus were laid the foundations of social case work, as we know it today, or perhaps we should say, as we knew it in the nineteen twenties. We can only allude here to the strengthening, enrichment and development of skill in this individualistic approach which ~~came later~~ through the systematic training provided by Schools of Social Work and the contributions of modern psychology and psychiatry.

It was the Charity Organization Societies which inaugurated the practice of keeping records which would be valuable from the statistical standpoint.

ecology and topography.

In 1893 a Committee on Charity Organization expressed the hope that:

> "This sort of information, if carefully collected and collated will soon become a treasury of details to which the sociologist will confidently resort, and on which legislators, reformers, and workers among the poor, have already begun to base their courses of conduct."*

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* Charity Organization in the United States, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1893. p. 77

The substitution, during recent years, of the words "Family Welfare" for "Charity Organization" in the titles of most of these agencies was a recognition of a change of objective and function which had taken place almost against their will. Nevertheless, these organizations have played a major part in bringing about the establishment of the social service exchanges, welfare federations and community councils which now in some measure perform what previous efforts aimed to accomplish, namely, the coordination of relief activities to prevent over-lapping and waste.

Depression of 1883-85. The country was no sooner out of the depression of 1874-78, than that of 1884 made its appearance. It was short but sharp. A speaker at the National Conference of Charities in 1885 estimated that there were 998,839 unemployed in the United States, although, as he admitted this to be a guess, round numbers would have seemed more appropriate. The causes were thought to be the introduction of machinery and contract labor.

Reports given at the annual convention of the Directors of the Poor of Pennsylvania in 1883 and 1884 give evidence of great suffering in the mining counties. In 1883 a representative from Schuylkill County stated that miners worked full time but a part of the year and that in the coming year they would probably get no more than four months of full-time employment; there were too many miners. In 1883, Schuylkill, with 130,000 in-

habitants, spent $40,000 in outdoor relief and Westmoreland, with a population of 80,000, spent $10,000.*

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* Proceedings of Directors of the Poor of Pennsylvania, 1883. p. 66.

The increase in outdoor relief expenditures was so marked at this time as to cause some of the directors of the poor to make determined efforts to have a resolution passed abolishing it altogether. This was thwarted by fiery pleas from the president of the Association** and a

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** R. C. McNamara of Bedford, pp. 68-70.

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councilman of Philadelphia. The latter exclaimed: "I plead the cause of the poor and against poor guardians!" He declared that the need was for more common sense, education and humanity. "When they go to the almshouse they are branded. . . Every organization should make some arrangement to provide work for (the unemployed man) . . . and pay him for it and pay him well."***

*** Thomas Walter, Philadelphia, pp. 72-75.

The next year (1884) a long struggle by the Knights of Labor to have the importation of contract labor outlawed was finally successful. Outside of the labor groups, there seems to have been little grasp of the realities regarding unemployment in the decade 1874-1884.

A report prepared for the National Conference of Charities and Corrections and the American Science Association, meeting jointly, in 1874, alludes to the unemployed workers who flocked to the cities the preceding winter as "a dangerous class -- a class alleging impossibility to procure employment and sustenance . . . there is no excuse in a country like this, with its immense natural resources and its demand everywhere for labor, for

the existence of such a class." The report expressed much concern over the demoralizing effect of charity upon "honest workmen" and it was remarked that skilled artisans were pauperized, the proof being that they refused to accept lower wages and had money to give labor unions. "Labor was in struggle with capital against a lowering of prices [wages]. Charity assisted labor in the combat. . . The whole settlement of the labor question was postponed by the over-generous charity of the city."*

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* Written by Charles L. Brace, for the "Department of Social Economy," Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1874. pp. 18-24.

A director of the poor, speaking at the meeting to form an association in 1876, was less easily satisfied:

> "There is a cause for everything, and must be for this. A short time ago we were prosperous as a nation, with employment and money for all. We built railroads and established every other branch of business and held out inducements to people of other countries to come here and accumulate fortunes . . . they came . . . and are here now without sufficient labor in the country to employ one half the people. We should punish the responsible parties, and not those who cannot help it. The Legislature should ask the capitalists and monopolies to contribute something to the support of those who are reduced to poverty and degradation through their mismanagement."**

** Johnson, Edward, Westmoreland County, Report of proceedings of convention of Directors of the Poor, 1876. p. 29.

Although the whole history of relief is inextricably bound up with the question of employment and this in turn with conditions in industry, the usual connection seems largely to have escaped those who shaped relief policies during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the long list of symptoms listed in the numerous studies of the "Causes of Poverty," unemployment, irregular work, inadequate earnings, loss of the bread winner through industrial accident and disease, and the less obvious unemployability due to child labor, slum conditions and malnutrition are writ large. Nevertheless,

most leaders in the relief fields, both public and private, continued to speak and act upon the assumption that poverty was largely within the control of the individual and hence an indication of indolence, improvidence or due to temporary misfortune. This may be attributed partly to the failure to realize that the pioneer conditions under which opportunities were usually open to the able-bodied were passing.

It is interesting to compare this attitude with Mathew Carey's challenge to the laissez-faire philosophy in 1834 and to note how close the latter is to the following statement made by a prominent welfare worker in 1931:*

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* Lurie, Harry L., Director of the Bureau of Jewish Social Research, The Drift of Public Relief, National Conference of Social Work, 1931. p. 218.

> "The growth of public relief . . . is to be explained by the tendency to use the taxing power of government as a means of securing regular income for insecure classes of the population unable to function effectively in an individualistic economic system. . .
>
> "The development of public relief may be considered as a definite reaction against the validity of the principle of private responsibility for poverty."

The Stultification of Public Outdoor Relief. In 1875 two Allegheny County relief officials called a meeting of Directors of the Poor to discuss their mutual problems and especially the difficulty of applying obsolete and conflicting residence laws at a time when there was a general shifting of the laboring population in search of employment. Twenty-eight poor districts, most of them county units from the western and southern parts of the State, were represented. Out of this grew the Association of Directors of the Poor. Up until 1917, after which expenses of delegates were paid, few of the overseers from the counties retaining the old township and borough system attended, and many of the more remote rural county units failed to

participate.

During the first years, the programs of the annual convention consisted largely of free, informal discussions, and the printed reports are revealing. Poor relief principles and practices, imported from England in colonial times, were accepted as final by most directors of the poor and embodied the following conceptions: "Indoor" or almshouse care, even for families, was held to be less demoralizing than "Outdoor Relief" in the home. The belief was deep rooted that the amount of relief given should be the least that would sustain life in order to prevent pauperization. This was founded upon two assumptions; the first, that men will not work except under the spur of necessity, a belief still widely held; the second, that any man who really wants a job can always get it, a natural supposition in the America of the eighteen hundreds, however unwarranted. Not only were these assumptions held to be self-evident truths by most people, but it was supposed that if hardship and disgrace were concomitants of relief, the "unworthy" would somehow be sifted out and only the "deserving" and truly needy would apply, whereas observation has proved the reverse to be the case.

In 1776, a representative of the State Board of Public Charities stated that from one third to one half of the total expenditures for public charities in Pennsylvania went for outdoor relief. This was deplored by some Directors of the Poor, but others defended it on the grounds of both humanity and economy. The boldest did not venture to uphold it except as a temporary measure, but some felt that, in cases of unemployment, families should be kept together. A delegate from Allegheny County, after a plea for personal visitation of applicants, said: "We have good, honest, industrious mechanics out of employment and compelled to ask temporary relief. It is not Christian or right to compel these men to break up their little homes and go to the poor house . . . there . . . a family of five would cost $10.55 a week,

while we can relieve that family by giving them two or three dollars, thus making money and not breaking up their home."*

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* Proceedings of the Convention of the Directors of the Poor, 1876. p. 9.

An official from Delaware County also spoke of economy, saying that it cost $1.70 per week per person in the almshouse and but $1.00 per week for a family at home. It seems strange that the economy argument did not make a more widespread appeal. It appears to have been counterbalanced by deep-rooted attitudes and by the feeling that outdoor relief lent itself to abuses more readily than almshouse care.

There were relief officials, however, who saw that the remedies for these abuses were more careful investigation and honest administration. The stumbling block lay in the lack of time on the part of directors of the poor, in the failure of most of them to measure up to the job and in the difficulties of operating under a cumbersome and antiquated system of laws and customs administered by elected officials.

About 1884 the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity and other private agencies began to wield much influence in the Association of Directors of the Poor. It is idle to speculate upon what might have been accomplished had the charity organization societies and similar agencies turned their attention to the improvement of the outdoor relief services which were a constant target for their criticisms. Instead they attempted to suppress public outdoor relief entirely on the ground that it was inefficient; that it could not be free from politics; that it tended to pauperize because applicants regarded charity from this source as a right, and that private charity kept alive the sympathies of the privileged classes.

Public outdoor relief was abolished in Philadelphia in 1800 and in Pittsburgh in 1893. Mr. Charles Kellogg, speaking as a representative of the

that

charity organization societies at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in 1894, said:

> "Simultaneously with the beginning of Charity Organization, and promoted by the same men, there was a repression in important cities of official outdoor relief. . . While this elimination of outdoor relief was not pressed by formal action of our societies, Charity Organizations claimed the credit of it as the result of their agitation and personal effort, and it was exactly in the line of the principles they advocated."*

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* An exception to this was the Buffalo Society for Organizing Charity which attempted to cooperate with the city authorities and for twenty years investigated all applications for public outdoor relief. This does not seem to have resulted in any improvement in the public service and was finally dropped, not only because of the heavy case load and financial burdens involved, but because the recommendations of the Society were frequently ignored by the authorities. Report of Committee on Charity Organization, National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1893. p. 60.

There were some protests against suppression of outdoor relief, although surprisingly few from poor relief officials. At the National Conference of Charities for 1891, one speaker urged the maintenance of public outdoor relief on the ground that "private charity is not yet dependable enough."** At the same Conference, however, a member of the Pennsylvania

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** Mrs. M. J. Lilly of Portland, Maine, on Public Outdoor Relief, Report of National Conference of Charities, 1891. p. 33.

Poor Law Commission of 1890, who was thoroughly conversant with English poor laws and relief practices, condemned public outdoor relief and reiterated the belief that relief must be kept at a minimum and made disgraceful to prevent pauperization.***

*** Mr. J. Nevin Hill of Sunbury, Pennsylvania, on Public Outdoor Relief, Report of National Conference of Charities, 1891. p. 36.

The outstanding authority on social welfare of that day took the stand that public relief, if properly administered, might be preferable to private

charity, but in this he was almost alone."*

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* Warner, Amos G., author of American Charities.

The Days of Coxey's Army (1892-97). The twenty years from 1890 to 1910 witnessed the greatest mass migration in modern times. It also saw the practical exhaustion of free land in the West. This is not an attempt to trace the causes of depressions, but these coincident facts are too germane to be ignored.

In the Summer of 1892 the historic and bloody steel strike at Homestead, Pennsylvania, ushered in a period of wage cuts, strikes, unemployment, mortgaged farms, business and bank failures. By the next year a severe depression was well underway. Industrial sections were seriously affected. Wage contracts between coal miners and operators were broken and United States Steel, for the first time, reduced wages. A business census of 119 cities showed over 800,000 unemployed, with nearly 2,000,000 dependent upon them.

"Idle farm hands tramped the country in search of work. Unemployed operatives crowded the streets of factory towns demanding work or food, and laborers abandoned the mining districts and flocked to the cities. Unskilled labor was prostrated and the ranks of skilled labor were badly shattered. . ." In the Spring of 1894 "general want and distress led to labor strikes and riots."**

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* Lightner, Otto C., op. cit., p. 291.

In March, 1894, an "Industrial Army," consisting of several hundred ragged, hungry men, under the leadership of Jacob S. Coxey, a native Pennsylvanian, marched out of Massillon, Ohio, bound for the national Capitol. Almost similtaneously there was a spontaneous movement of other groups of

unemployed workmen from Maine to California, all converging upon the seat of government to demand work on governmental projects (specifically good roads) and payment in legal tender notes issued by the treasury to increase the amount of money in circulation.

As the natural highway to Washington, Pennsylvania was called upon to play host to many of these marchers, and the State contributed not a few to their ranks. The first contingent under Coxey was met with open arms in Beaver Falls, even factories and schools being closed. The citizens had collected quantities of provisions. The progress of the Army through Allegheny County evoked a continuous ovation by the working classes. This so alarmed the authorities that in Allegheny City they diverted the line of march, disappointing the waiting spectators, and kept the army under close surveillance during its stay.

Nothing more remarkable is recorded than the firm discipline maintained by the leaders and the law-abiding self-control of the men under such circumstances. This seems to have had its effect, for in Pittsburgh and Homestead there was no "police persecution." Tons of food were sent ahead for use in crossing the mountains, but the army had a hard march through a snow storm and dwindled appreciably. It was escorted across Somerset County to the Maryland line, in a perfectly friendly spirit, by a sheriff and twenty deputies, and fresh supplies were donated. In Maryland Coxey was joined by a division of fifty from Philadelphia.

Only a few hundred of Coxey's men reached Washington but further contingents of "Industrials" continued to arrive until July. Congress saw fit to ignore not merely their demands but their very presence. Those who persisted were gradually starved out or told to move on by the police.

Reporters for Pittsburgh papers and others who came in contact with these "Commonweal" armies testified that they were composed largely of

genuine workingmen, many of them skilled. The reports and printed speeches of the leaders indicate complete loyalty to the government and an almost childlike confidence that Congress would hear and redress their grievances.

The views of the average business man in regard to the situation in 1894 probably were well expressed by the President of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections for 1894, in his annual address:

> "And now a new and serious feature is added to the problem (of almsgiving). Great armies of the unemployed are at the capitol of the nation seeking relief and aid of the Government. . . perhaps in our laudable ambition to advance our system of education, we have unfortunately, placed some children beyond the callings which they must follow in life . . . possibly honest labor has, without intent, been degraded."*

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* Storrs, Lucius C., of Michigan, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1894. pp. 4-5.

Quite another estimate of the unemployed workman was given by a leader in the Charity Organization field:**

** Kellogg, Charles D., The Situation in New York City During the Winter of 1893-94, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1894. p. 22.

> "Working classes hold charitable enterprises in detestation and scorn. The feeling does not arise simply from self-respect, - because a man or woman would not have the name of being relieved, - but from an economic and class conviction that charitable relief stands in the way of a juster distribution of profits . . . Labor demands justice, not charity."

Reports presented on methods by which the distress of the Winter of 1893-94 were met in ten cities are of great interest but they leave us in the dark as to how those in the mining regions and the smaller industrial centers fared, although the suggestive statement is made that coal miners worked one hundred and eighty-three days in a year, on an average.

A summary prepared for the use of the Russell Sage Foundation in October, 1931, describes the depression of 1893-98 as a period of centralized relief committees of citizens, and widely advertised funds. The publicity invited applications in such numbers that no individualized care was possible.

There was an admission by the private relief societies that the situation was too much for them. In Philadelphia "The Citizens Permanent Relief Committee," which had $25,000 in its treasury left from sums collected for foreign sufferers, cooperated with the five large relief agencies. The $25,000 was soon found to be entirely inadequate. Work relief was provided which consisted of cleaning alleys and side streets not covered by contractors. "The men were at first chosen from among those who each morning applied for aid; but so many collected daily at the ward officesthat it was found necessary to send employment cards. . ." Wages were $1.00 per diem in cash, "as it was felt that they could doubtless make the money go farther and spend it more judiciously themselves."*

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* Rosengarten, Joseph G., A Successful Experiment in Utilizing Unemployed Labor, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1894. p. 59.

In the Kensington textile district, where distress was particular acute, workingmen's aid societies were formed. The work of the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity was doubled. Transients were cared for, in so far as possible, at its Wayfarer's Lodges.

The situation in Pittsburgh was even more acute than in Philadelphia. In December, 1893, the Mayor called a meeting at which committees were appointed and subscriptions asked for unemployment relief. Here, too, work relief at $1.00 for a 10 hour day was provided, and a recently acquired park was improved. The Department of Public Works furnished foremen

and engineers. Only United States citizens were eligible for work relief, which left large numbers ineligible. A census of unemployed taken by the police in one day showed 5,300 heads of families out of work, but between January 1 and April 5, 1894, 22,325 different applications for work were received. The police investigated these applications and the total number given work was 13,234. From 2,000 to 5,000 were kept at work throughout the Winter. Two railroads furnished free transportation to and from the parks.

A representative of the central committee stated:

> "In no case was politics allowed to interfere either for or against any applicant; and the greatest tribute that can possibly be paid to the Committee lies in the fact that . . . no one had any complaint to make against (it) . . .
>
> "Apart from this Committee a number of other organizations were started - missions, leagues, clubs, unions etc., - one of which established a soup house that did more harm than good. Some of these mushroom organizations sought honor for their work through the newspapers, with the result that Pittsburgh became the Mecca for . . . tramps.
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> "The Department of Public Safety . . . had to inaugurate a special department of food supply, and to feed all loungers at the crowded police stations."*

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* McConnagle, R. D., The Winter in Pittsburgh, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1894. p. 39.

The foregoing led to the conclusion that a more complete organization of agencies was imperative, with central registration and accounting for disbursements of funds collected for charitable purposes.**

** The latter is now provided for by the Solicitation of Funds Act administered by the Department of Welfare.

These reports of the handling of emergency relief in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh during the Winter of 1893-94 are by participants who helped to shape the methods used. A more objective account is given in the Russell

Sage Foundation summary of relief in depressions previously cited:

> "No one who had faced in that earlier period the struggling masses fighting for work-tickets; no one who had realized the cruelty of sending narrow-chested tailors to the stone pile, or of treating the unemployed in any one way could ever forget the experience."*

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* Quoted by Philip Klein in The Burden of Unemployment, p. 6.

From Symptoms to Causes

Deepening Insight. The depression of 1893-97, coming after ten years of almost unbroken prosperity, dealt one of the cherished dogmas of the charity organizations a body blow. In the face of hundreds of industrious workmen, many of them skilled, forced to seek relief, it was difficult to hold fast to the belief that "not alms but a friend" was sufficient. It also brought renewed awareness of their failure so far to achieve any real organization of charities, and an increased appreciation to many relief agencies of the value of careful investigation and of the painstaking recording of facts.

This depression opened the eyes and ears of many to such challenges as Florence Kelley's plans for the abolition of child labor, inhumanly long hours and sweat shop conditions; to the crying need for improvements in sanitation and housing; to the evils of a poor relief policy that was satisfied to ship vagrant families on to the next town or state. Moreover, the Committee on Community Organization of the 1896 Conference of Charities and Corrections went so far as to advocate relief, not only to unemployed workmen, but to strikers, thus meeting squarely the position taken by radicals that by aiding the unemployed charity was subsidizing industry, and the contention of conservatives that assistance to strikers was encouraging rebellion, or was at least taking sides in a dispute in which

social agencies should be neutral.

A Canadian authority, even then, recognized the possibility of an "economy of abundance" could unemployment be abolished - "the poverty of today is not resultant from the inability of labor to produce wealth, provided only it is permitted to do so. . . It is . . . not the result of lack of industry on the part of those who are suffering. Labor is . . . clamoring, beseeching, praying God and man for an opportunity to work."*

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* Craig, Reverend S. S., The Abolition of Poverty, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1877. p. 272.

He spoke of "so-called over-production which is really under consumption."

At the same time, Jane Addams mentioned technological improvements as a major cause of unemployment. She described the effect of involuntary idleness upon the morale of the worker, but added: "I have not that great fear of pauperizing people which some of you seem to have."

The educative effects of this depression upon organized charity are reflected in the fact that the charity organization societies revised their schedules listing the causes of dependency, some causes being eliminated and others shifted to the column indicating causes "Outside the Family." One statistician went so far as to reduce them to "exploitation of labor and defects of governmental supervision" and thought that if these could be eliminated "the irreducible minimum of natural depravity . . . or whatever" would not be large enough to constitute a problem. The same student called attention to the fact that families are poor because they are large, not vice versa.**

** Brandt, Lilian, Statistician, New York Charity Organization Society. Quoted in Warner's American Charities, pp. 150-151.

The Rise of Social Settlements. In the meantime a movement of high significance and far reaching influence had taken root, which was to serve as a counterpoise to the preoccupation of the case worker with the individual - a preoccupation which had already been recognized by acute observers as inadequate to cope with poverty.

> "He who takes an interest in trying to cure poverty in a single case will soon come to find that nothing in politics or industry is foreign to him. . . It was once the accepted doctrine that prosperity and happiness were the natural results and reward of goodness, but the social worker, in daily contact with the poor sees that their poverty comes from a deeper source than the vices or virtues of the individual -"*

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* Warner, Amos G., American Charities, p. 465.

There is significance in the fact that Toynbee Hall, the first social settlement, was established in London in 1884, a year of world wide depression. Julia Lathrop, speaking of Arnold Tobynbee, said that "history and economics, interpreted by his passion for humanity, irresistibly thrust him into the thick of life, -- into that life whose unregarded misery . . . has finally made the whole world shudder at the cheerful laissez faire of the old political economy."**

** What the Settlement Work Stands For, National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1896. pp. 106-107.

The first settlement in this country was opened in 1887 in New York, and in 1889 Hull House was founded in Chicago. Philadelphia was a little late in catching the settlement idea. The first permanent settlement was the College Settlement which in 1892 took over the work of the St. Mary Street Library Association (founded in 1884). In the next fifteen years at least 30 settlements which were to prove enduring sprang into being in Philadelphia, including such outstanding organizations as the Southwark Neighborhood House

in the southern congested section, the Lighthouse, in the Kensington textile district, and Starr Center, devoted to the welfare of Negroes. Many of these were religious in character such as the various Deaconesses' homes. By the time of the founding of the Settlement Music School in 1911 this movement had passed its zenith, but the existing settlements continue to be centers of social and civic experiment and education and to send leaders into the general field of social work.

In Pittsburgh the Irene Kauffman Settlement (1900) and Kingsley House (1901) are two of several which have done a like work for that city. This movement did not reach many other cities in Pennsylvania, Wilkes-Barre and Erie being the only smaller cities to foster such centers at this period.

The settlement movement was given impetus, direction and significance by the depression of 1893-97. The influence of the settlements was reflected in an intense concern about housing and sanitation and other slum problems. Such books as How the Other Half Lives by Jacob Riis approached the status of best sellers. Many studies and estimates were made to determine what was "a fair living wage," accompanied by a recognition of its fundamental significance.

Unemployment was found to be a perennial problem. In 1905, a study of dependent families in New York revealed that in 71 per cent the chief wage earner was out of work at the time of application.

The settlements were the social science laboratories of that generation. That they were so recognized is indicated by the fact that the foremost topic on the program of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections for 1896 was "Social Settlements and the Labor Question." Graham Taylor, the speaker, after stating that one of the chief functions of settlements

"is the observation of facts as to the social conditions of labor," said:

> ". . . the labor movement is not, as so many among us seem to think, yesterday's movement of some men against others, of a few strikers against employers. . . It is the movement of Man. Crafts and classes are moved by it, but it is the movement of the mass. Men and measures are its way marks, but its progress marks the way life is taking."*

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* The Social Settlement and the Labor Movement, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1896. pp. 144-145.

A Depression with Improvements (1907-08). Writers reporting on the depression of 1907-08 agree that the handling of emergency relief presented a distinct improvement over the methods used in 1893. In many cities sensational appeals and hastily improvised machinery were avoided. The needs were met so far as possible by the expansion of the services of existing relief agencies. This was true even in Philadelphia, which was especially hard hit by industrial conditions, although "more good could have been done had the local societies had more money, especially for salaries for additional workers, to relieve those greatly overworked. Even so, the amount of distress was infinitely less than where there was no charity organization society, as in Pittsburgh at the time. In such places, although the poor did not starve on the streets, families were broken up because of poverty, others were underfed or poorly housed."**

** Watson, F. D., The Charity Organization Movement in the United States, p. 580.

In the Pittsburgh area, not only were thousands of steel workers laid off during this winter but at least 30 per cent of the miners in the region were idle. There was a temporary drawing together of Pittsburgh social agencies, among which conditions had been very chaotic, and the first Neum-

cil of Social Agencies in the country was formed there in 1908.

There is mention of much unemployment among skilled workmen and those now classed as "white collar" workers in this depression, but it does not appear that many of them applied for relief. Edward T. Devine, Editor of Charities saw clearly that the working people bear the brunt of depressions -- "the workingman, who ordinarily takes care of himself, is doing so still."

Relief agencies were still carrying a much increased case load in the winter of 1908-09 due to the exhaustion of the resources of many who survived the first winter without seeking aid. There is comment also on poor nutrition among school children, and school lunches came into vogue about this time.

The transient family was first recognized as a problem at this period. "Seasonal or intermittent occupations, temporary jobs, and commercial depressions, pull settled families up by the roots and seldom leave them long enough in one place to take root again. Our manual workers are more and more transient. Many among them are forced to become tramping families. . . Thus people lose their sense of belonging to anything or anybody."*

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* Taylor, Graham, Neighborhood and Municipality, Report of National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1909. p. 137.

Milestones

Some very significant events followed the depression of 1907-08:

An international conference on unemployment was planned in Paris in 1909 and held in 1910, thus definitely recognizing the industrial and commercial interrelation of nations.

The Pittsburgh Survey was initiated in 1909, by the Charities Publications Committee of the New York Charity Organization Society. It was an

exhaustive, study of a typical American industrial city, covering every phase of its life from housing and industrial accidents to government. It fearlessly exposed exploitation and corruption and presented such a picture of "piled up actuality" in regard to the living conditions of the working population as to startle and horrify the most complacent.

The first White House Conference on Child Welfare was called by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1909. This forever set the seal of disapproval upon the practice of breaking up families "because of poverty alone." This and the final abandonment by private relief agencies (in theory at least) of the long held fallacy that meagre relief and a feeling of disgrace will stimulate industry and independence in those aided, were white milestones on the road leading to the present conception of what constitutes true family welfare.

The Public Charities Association of Pennsylvania was founded in 1912, --

> "To work for the reduction of the suffering, social waste, and expense entailed by dependency, mental disease, and crime; and . . . to gather and disseminate information which will influence public opinion and guide legislative action for better standards of welfare work in local communities as well as in state-wide projects."*

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* Social Work Year Book, 1935. p. 665.

This it has consistently done, varying its program from time to time in order to mobilize public opinion behind measures designed to meet urgent needs.

The Pennsylvania Mothers' Assistance Act was passed in 1913, part of a nation wide movement which began in 1911. Consistent with their previous attitude toward all public outdoor relief, many leaders in the field of private relief opposed it, but in a few years private social agencies were vigorous supporters of the measure.

This was because, in Pennsylvania, it was ably administered and kept remarkably free from political influence. Acting through county welfare boards divorced from poor relief, the Mothers' Assistance Fund built up a social case work service that has compared favorably with that developed by the best private agencies. Handicapped by inadequate appropriations, the Department early took a stand against "spreading it thin" and insisted upon meeting the minimum budget needs of the families accepted for care. This not only insured to the children of these families reasonably adequate provision but, through the standing reproach of a long waiting list which must be cared for by poor boards and private agencies, aroused the public conscience and so gradually forced up the appropriations. Many families in which the chief breadwinner is missing or disabled are ineligible for Mothers' Assistance because the Pennsylvania law limits its benefits to widows and "the wives of men permanently confined" in hospitals for the insane.

III WAR AND AFTER

Pre-War Depression (1914-1915)

Before the outbreak of the war in 1914 had dislocated American industry, there were signs of a coming depression. In 1913, a Camden ship-building concern employing many Philadelphians laid off 3,000 workers in one day, an illustration of what was happening in certain industries. The war crisis found many workmen with savings depleted, debts already incurred, morale disrupted. By February, 1914, estimates by the United States Department of Labor and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company fixed the number of unemployed in New York City alone at 400,000.

The following comments on unemployment relief in New York in the winter of 1914-15 would have applied equally well in some parts of Pennsylvania:

> "I must confess to having been more impressed by what was not undertaken and accomplished than by what was initiated and carried out; and this was not because the Committee was not a representative one. On the contrary, it represented, all too accurately, the attitude of comfortable public opinion . . . its tendency to minmize the evil, its easy acceptance of superficial rather than fundamental remedies, its preference for private charity and distrust of public action, and finally its willingness to relax its efforts as soon as the crisis is past and leave the community as little ready to meet the next crisis as it was to meet the last one."*

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* Seager, Henry R., Unemployment: Problems and Remedies, Report of National Conference of Charities, 1915. pp. 493-494.

In Philadelphia the depression of 1914-15 brought a return of the volunteer, centralized relief committee. Foreseeing a winter of severe suffering, five large welfare agencies of the city urged the Mayor and City Council to provide for the unemployed through public works, and

winter

appealed to the public for more generous contributions to the established relief organizations. However, the Council decided to appropriate $50,000 for direct relief, over the protests of the Mayor, and entrusted its administration to the Emergency Aid Committee, a group of women originally organized for war relief work. Believing that the appropriation of public funds to a private organization was unsound in principle, the relief agencies declined to participate, but they did loan workers and give advice. Several months later, the first sum having been exhausted, the city appropriated a second $50,000 to the Committee. The investigations were made chiefly by volunteers and were necessarily hurried and superficial. It is significant that approximately 600 of the first 700 applicants to the Emergency Aid Committee were found to be already under the care of other agencies.

In some large cities, the handling of relief in 1914-15 was marked by distinct advances over that in other depressions. Public appropriations were used to provide useful work at prevailing wages and private efforts were directed toward expanding the work of existing agencies, so that standards of care were not lowered. This was without doubt the result of certain national efforts. The American Association for Organizing Family Social Work,* founded in 1911, had been working for improved

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* Name changed to Family Welfare Association of America in 1930.

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standards and greater unity in relief. With the cooperation of the Russell Sage Foundation, information as to the probability of a hard winter was assembled in 1914 by the questionnaire method, after which a conference of executives of relief agencies in 17 leading cities was held in New York and plans laid to meet the emergency through concerted community programs. This was followed by continued consultation and exchange of helpful in-

formation which proved of great assistance in the cities which adopted these plans.

Two national conferences on unemployment were held in 1914 at which considerable progress was made in analysis of the causes and formulation of remedies for unemployment. The subject was also discussed exhaustively by the National Conference of Charities, the Association of Directors of the Poor and Charities of Pennsylvania, and similar bodies. The most significant recommendations made were: (1) an adequate public employment service, (2) long range planning of public works, (3) the regularization of private employment to avoid seasonal work and lay-offs, (4) a shorter work week and vacations with pay, (5) the sifting out of unemployables and public provision for them, (6) old age pensions, (7) unemployment insurance, (8) cooperation between local, state and federal agencies to meet the problems of dependency.

Statistics show that in 1915, even more than in previous depressions, men were displaced in industry by women and children at lower wages.

The depression of 1914-15 did not run its course. It was ended abruptly by war orders that began to pour in from Europe. But, like all depressions, it left indelible scars on individual lives. "There are a devitalization and demoralization that come from idleness and discouragement and privation from which a family never recovers. . . These are the things that unmake a nation."*

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* Taylor, Graham, The Field of Cooperative Undertaking, Report of National Conference of Charities, 1916. p. 161.

Post-War Depression (1920-22)

The depression of 1920-22 was studied in action. Recognizing the value of an unbiased and objective record, the Russell Sage Foundation

undertook a survey of the relief methods in use in fifteen representative cities during the winter of 1921-22.*

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* Klein, Philip, op. cit.

How Urban Centers Met Unemployment. Social agencies began to feel the effects of unemployment in November, 1920. Although more funds were raised, by January, 1921, the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity announced that it could no longer receive unemployment cases. The funds of other relief agencies were likewise depleted.

In this crisis, public outdoor relief was temporarily revived. The Philadelphia City Council appropriated in all $14,000 and the Department of Public Welfare agreed to assist families in which unemployment was the sole problem. There was no provision for administration, so the private agencies loaned workers from their already overburdened staffs. Even so, the Department personnel was so inadequate that, by the Fall of 1921, applicants had to wait three weeks for investigation.

In November, 1921, the newly organized Welfare Federation made its first drive in Philadelphia. By this time purse strings were tightly drawn -- it did not make its goal. Public pressure to induce the City Council to provide $100,000 for relief, resulted in an appropriation of only $2,500. It was practically gone in a month and for a time no aid was forthcoming for the unemployed. In February, 1922, work relief was instituted by the Society for Organizing Charity, financed by a private gift of $25,000. Real work was provided by settlements, hospitals and public parks, for which prevailing wages were paid. It was handled through a central unemployment office in charge of trained workers. The number cared for through this work was comparatively small.

Certain comments of the Russell Sage Foundation study concerning Pittsburgh reveal a situation by no means peculiar to that city -- a situation which at times has been practically nation-wide during the present depression:

> "Unemployment in Pittsburgh in the Winter of 1921-22 was exceedingly severe. Dependable figures were available to show it: consecutive reports in the United States Employment Service bulletins, local surveys early in the Autumn of 1921, one of them by the Employers' Association, and figures of public and private employment bureaus agreed on the question. Yet hardly a trace of recognition of the fact came from the press or from the civic organizations of the city."

The report relates how the social agencies of the city were divided into two groups and for a time even conducted two social service exchanges. Toward the end of the Winter they did unite to form a Federation of Social Agencies, but each made reservations to safeguard its own interests. The treatment accorded homeless men was inadequate. A shelter conducted by a private agency gave many of its beds to paying guests. There was no municipal lodging house and a police drill room was pressed into service. Here men slept closely packed on the bare floor and were fed on bread and coffee.

No special emergency measures were taken in Pittsburgh that winter, either by public officials or by private groups.

A study of relief costs over a five year period in a number of urban centers throughout the nation was presented by a Committee of the National Conference of Social Work in 1922. This yielded the following information concerning Pennsylvania: Disbursements of private agencies since 1917 showed an increase of 111 per cent in Philadelphia, of one per cent in Delaware County, of 203 per cent in Pittsburgh, of 460 per cent in Erie.*

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* The Significance of the Rise in Relief-giving During the Past Five Years, Report of National Conference of Social Work, 1922. p. 229.

The report found this rise in the cost of private relief to be closely connected with unemployment.

Relief in the Counties. That farmers' troubles were acute following the war is well known, and social workers whose duties took them into the coal regions at this time can testify to the intense suffering that prevailed among miners with the sudden cessation of war demands. The reports of the annual meetings of the Directors of the Poor reflect greater demands for outdoor relief in this than in preceding depressions, but there is little evidence of any widespread recognition of the need for any change in methods, except in a few counties where Red Cross work or that of other agencies had shown the way. It is significant that Delaware County, where private disbursements had increased but one per cent in five years, was one of the few to employ trained workers to investigate applications for outdoor relief.

Losses of Labor. The depression of 1920-21 wiped out the war-wage savings of thousands of workmen. These savings doubtless preserved many families from severe privation, but the succeeding years were to bring no opportunity to most workers to retrieve their losses. The drastic wage cuts which occurred at this time were never fully restored, but during the next eight years commodity prices remained high. Real wages for unskilled labor were again below -- often far below -- the level of comfortable subsistence.

During the war, the labor unions had made decided progress in organization and had won for all workers a better standard of living. These gains were due more to several years of steady work than to the reputed high wages, since the latter were largely off-set by higher living costs. The depression of 1921, with one stroke, wiped out most of these gains.

Post-War Gains

Establishment of State Department of Welfare. Agitation for a State Department to replace the State Board of Public Charities had been going on for some years. The Board had outlived its usefulness. The State was maintaining large institutions for every type of defective and was subsidizing annually many hospitals and other private institutions and agencies. The need for centralization and stronger control over these was recognized. Change was in the air in 1921, and the new Department was instituted. It was headed by a cabinet member and staffed by workers trained for the various types of service required. Mothers' Assistance was transferred from the Department of Public Instruction, and prisons, hospitals and other institutions and agencies were placed under the jurisdiction of the Department.

Among its other duties was supervision of almshouses, but

> ". . . in the realm of poor relief the new Department found its powers limited, as were those of its predecessor, to inspection and largely unimplemented." Its connection with outdoor relief consists only of "the power to promote county welfare boards to coordinate social welfare activities in the counties. . . The whole domain of outdoor relief . . . is conspicuously absent from (its) list of State Supervisory powers."*

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* Poor Relief Administration in Pennsylvania, State Department of Welfare, Harrisburg, 1934. pp. 177-178.

The Department of Welfare does require Poor Boards to include outdoor relief expenditures in their annual reports to the State, and its agents report such information about outdoor relief as Directors of the Poor choose to give them when they make inspections of almshouses. However, the Department has not been able to influence outdoor relief practices appreciably, except in the field of Mothers' Assistance.

Growth of Community Chests. The depression of 1921 gave new impetus to the growth of the community chest movement, which in 1918 had reached the point where a national association could be formed.* Chests or federations have usually absorbed existing social service exchanges and community councils, and, where these were lacking, have established them.

> "While the early community chests came into being because the financing of private social work was generally unplanned and competitive, there was an implicit recognition even then that the same was true of the services which the various agencies represented. As . . . the annual study of budgets has forced an increasingly careful scrutiny of quality of service, coordination, and relationship, the emphasis on planning of programs and coordination of work has come to equal that placed on the financial program."**

* Now the Association of Community Chests and Councils, Inc., 155 E. Forty-Fourth Street, New York City.

** Social Work Year Book, "Community Chests," Russell Sage Foundation. p.83

By 1931, Pennsylvania had 34 community chests in 27 counties but only five of these were on a county-wide basis.

The Days of Our Prosperity

Unemployment. Long before the spectacular crash of 1929, while many were acclaiming our unexampled prosperity, there were those who mistrusted it or looked in vain for its benefits. After 1920 there were miners who would never again find employment, while for few bituminous miners was there any prospect of steady work. To a lesser extent this was true also of textile workers and other groups. Technological unemployment was discussed seriously by experts, but was a subject for jest to many.

About 1924 the term "Gasoline Gypsies" came into vogue to denote the

wandering family, and the "hitch-hiker" began to infest the highways.*

* See Sanderson, Ross, "Gasoline Gypsies," Survey Graphic, December, 1924, p. 265. Also Mid-Monthly Survey, May, 1925.

At the same time, an increase in the transient or "tramp" problem is noted by the Directors of the Poor of Pennsylvania in their annual proceedings.

In many a report and sociological journal of the period are buried cries of warning which went all unheeded. By 1930 these had risen to a chorus. In the Survey Graphic for March, 1930, appeared an article, "Is Unemployment Here?"** This says:

** Amidon, Beulah, p. 679.

> "For some time there have been warnings of a falling barometer -- an increase of the ratio of applications to placements in the public employment agencies, many more applications for home work permits in large industrial centers, a steadily mounting number of men seeking shelter in homes for the homeless -- bad weather signs which few of us noted."

Reports gathered by the Survey from agencies in widely scattered cities revealed a sharp rise in case loads. The Philadelphia Family Society wrote: "There is considerably more unemployment this year than last, and the number of applications coming to us is exceptionally heavy," adding that there was much suffering among textile workers. The article pointed out that no special plans were being laid to meet this situation: "With some 4,000,000 workers unwillingly idle we ask one another dazedly, 'Is unemployment here? How much is there? Where is it? Why?'"

In the same Survey Graphic Leo Wolman called attention to the alarming increase in unemployment and the lack of reliable information: "Witness the astonishing discrepancies in the estimates by the President's Unemployment Conference in 1921, which varied from 3,500,000 to 5,500,000

persons.' But: "Wherever collected and by whatever methods they are checked, these figures always tell the same story of a steady decline, both in the number employed and in the total wages. . ."*

* Hall, Helen, Survey of the Effect of Unemployment, Report of National Conference of Social Work for 1930. p. 348.

In the Winter of 1928 a study of unemployment was made at the University Settlement, Philadelphia. It was found that seasonal workers were longer out of jobs, that suicides, insanity and desertion were disturbingly frequent, that long involuntary idleness was making many workers unemployable, that skilled workers, replaced by machines, must often take laboring work at starvation wages.

Rising Relief Costs. That during the eight years preceding the present depression our condition was not healthy is indicated by the constant rise in relief costs. This was reflected not only in the budgets of private relief agencies andcommunity chests but in increasing expenditures for public outdoor relief. Reports of poor boards to the State Department of Welfare from 1922 to 1929 show steadily mounting expenditures for outdoor relief. In 1928 these costs had increased 74.5 per cent over 1922; by 1929 outdoor relief expenditures were more than double those of 1922. It is estimated by various authorities that in 1929 approximately 50 per cent of the disbursements for family relief in the United States were derived from public funds, yet this was the period during which community chests were vastly stimulating private giving.

Pennsylvania is one of the greatest wealth-producing states, but its chief assets are now its great industrial plants and its mineral resources. A constitution framed in an agricultural era, when real estate represented almost all values, blocks the shifting of the main tax burden to the broad shoulders of industry. In the counties, especially in submarginal regions,

relief, carried chiefly by the small home owner and the farmer, already had become an irksome burden, resented by the taxpayer and kept at a minimum by local poor boards, more responsive to the sufferings of the taxpayers than of the poor. Even in 1929, the need for a broader tax base was obvious.

In a discussion of "The Drift of Public Relief" at the National Conference of Social Work in 1931, Harry L. Lurie, a noted student of social problems, said:

> "While local autonomy and local administration may be desirable in government, it is obvious that the principle of equalization of tax resources is essential if a satisfactory nation-wide system of relief is to be established. . . Taxes must be levied where wealth resides; they should be distributed when there is social need."*

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* Report of National Conference of Social Work, 1931. p. 221.

Unpreparedness. At various times in our history measures tending to relieve unemployment, as well as other evils, have been advocated. Some have been fought for persistently over many years and the industrial State of Pennsylvania has been a favorite battle-ground. In the late twenties, when all signs pointed to extensive unemployment, how many of these measures had we adopted?

First consider our lack of information. In every depression, relief measures have been hampered by a lack of reliable data. The actual number of unemployed, how many of them were employable, their occupations, family responsibilities and needs -- these facts so essential to a sound approach to the problem were largely lacking, although the need for these data had long been obvious. Estimates by "authorities" varied with the point it was desired to prove. Many valuable facts regarding workers were gathered in later Federal and State census reports, but significant statistics

regarding unemployment were conspicuous by their absence. Even State and Federal Departments of Labor were reduced to virtual guesswork when a crisis came, estimates being based on employment indices in certain large, basic industries, thus leaving out small establishments and casual workers.

Pennsylvania enacted a law establishing free State employment bureaus in 1915, but the system was never developed to a point where it was accessible to and used by any large number of workers. Its best work was done, perhaps, in the vocational direction and placement of juveniles in large cities. In 1929, an Act was passed to regulate the private employment agencies, which in many cases had cheated and preyed upon the workers, but they remained the chief dependence of the unemployed. Even the best of them worked blindly, with no accurate knowledge of the employment situation to guide them.

Public measures tending to improve the status of labor and increase purchasing power had made slight headway in 1929. The Pennsylvania child labor law went into effect in 1916 and practically no advance has been made since. Children over sixteen compete almost without restriction with adults, thus forcing down wages. Twelve-year-olds may sell newspapers, although this is one of the few occupations in which handicapped adults can engage successfully. Since Pennsylvania has no minimum wage law, the worst evils of sweatshops cannot be touched. While regulation of the hours of labor of women and minors and rules restricting home work held the worst abuses in check during prosperous times, under cover of widespread unemployment they could readily creep back. Such regulations as Pennsylvania had concerning hours of labor fell so short as to make slight impression on unemployment.

The great majority of Pennsylvania families did not receive a "living wage" even in 1929. In its preliminary Report, issued in 1934, the Pennsylvania State Planning Board states:

> "Approximately nine in every ten of Pennsylvania's families had incomes, even in 1929, that were inadequate for the complete attainment of reasonable comfort. In fact, many did not have enough for their basic needs. . .
>
> ". . . Adjusted to the purchasing power of the 1934 dollar, the minimum income for each family in the Commonwealth should be $3500, or for a single individual, $829 a year. But in 1929 only 12 per cent of the population received such incomes." (p. 284)

In security legislation, Pennsylvania, while in advance of some states, had made only a start in 1929. After long agitation, Pennsylvania passed its Workmen's Compensation Act in 1915. Although amended repeatedly since, it still leaves much to be desired, both in the amount of compensation allowed and in lack of flexibility. It fails entirely to provide for the victims of industrial disease.*

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* See Outline of Needed Changes in the Pennsylvania Workmen's Compensation System, issued by the Department of Labor and Industry, 1934.

The first effort to provide for the aged and thus eliminate them from industry was blocked by an adverse decision of the State Supreme Court in 1923. The present Act did not go into effect until December 1, 1934. The inadequacy of the appropriations for Mothers' Assistance, and of the maximum grant allowed, tended to drive young mothers into industry, to the detriment of their children and of the employment situation. In addition to thousands of families on the Mothers' Assistance waiting list because of insufficient funds, many other needy mothers, struggling to keep their families together, are ineligible because of the narrow provisions of the Pennsylvania Mothers' Assistance Act.

In Pennsylvania, as in other states, insurance against unemployment

has been left entirely to individual employers. A very small proportion of the industrial workers in the State have benefited by such schemes.

In 1924, John B. Andrews, Secretary of the American Association for Labor Legislation, expressed the belief that we were slipping into another depression and that there would be 5,000,000 unemployed in the country by 1925. He then struck a note that was to be the dominating theme of reformers for a number of years, blinding people to the necessity of preparing for coming disaster:

> "It is our present conviction . . . that if our system of competitive industry, although modified in an evolutionary way, is to be continued, that we in this country may sparingly utilize the various kinds of public relief and even some form of unemployment insurance; but that . . . our principal effort is to be directed toward the stabilization of employment.
>
> "The idea of preventing unemployment by regularizing production, now so strikingly taking hold of the imagination and the enlightened self-interest of industrial managers, has been finding its most helpful and concrete expression in individual plants."*

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* Stabilizing Industry, Report of National Conference of Social Work, 1924. p. 359.

That this hope was a frail reed upon which to lean is indicated by the following statement made in 1930:

> "If viewed from the standpoint of percentage alone, the showing of employers who have accomplished anything at all in stabilizing their labor turn-over is a sorry one indeed.
>
> "Society at large is almost as much to blame as industry. Only in the last twenty years has the germ of unemployment been isolated, so to speak, and recognized as an industrial rather than a charitable problem."**

** Draper, Ernest G., What Employers are Doing, Report of National Conference of Social Work, 1930. p. 320.

The Culmination

The general story of what happened in Pennsylvania after the stock market crash of October, 1929, has been told repeatedly, but many of the details are little known. Yet it is these grim details concerning the fate that has irresistibly engulfed individuals, families, communities, whole areas, which explain and lend with the logic of Greek tragedy to "Relief" as we know it in 1935.

Committees. Although the United States Census of 1930 indicated that over 300,000 "gainful workers" were unemployed in Pennsylvania, and every month thereafter thousands more were added to the ranks, no special measures were taken to meet the situation until the Fall of 1930, when citizens Emergency Committees began to be organized in various centers. The most prominent were the "Lloyd Committee"* in Philadelphia and the

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* After the Chairman, Horatio Gates Lloyd.

Allegheny County Emergency Relief Association in Pittsburgh.

At the same time, the "King Committee"** of fifty members, was

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** Chairman, Clyde L. King of the University of Pennsylvania.

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appointed by the Governor-elect, Gifford Pinchot, to study and report on state-wide conditions. It made various recommendations aimed at stimulation of business recovery, but failed to emphasize the need for relief. It had organized citizens committees in counties not already having them, and expressed confidence that localities would meet their own needs.

By the Summer of 1931 it was known to many whose duties brought them in contact with the unemployed that relief needs were not being met and that there was acute suffering in some sections of the State, especially in the coal regions. The State Department of Labor and Industry reported that there

were over 900,000 unemployed wage earners in the state, i.e., nearly a quarter of all Pennsylvania workers were idle.

Another committee was appointed by the Governor in July, 1931.* It

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* Known as the "Baker Committee" from the Chairman, Horace Forbes Baker.

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consisted of seven members, five of whom were prominent in welfare activities. In its study this committee made use of material furnished by the various State departments, by poor relief officials, by community chests and councils and other private relief agencies, and of certain studies made in distressed counties by the United States Children's Bureau. This material and the report of the committee has been drawn upon for the following composite picture of conditions existing in Pennsylvania in 1931.

Industrial Conditions. The situation in the large manufacturing centers of the State in the third year of this depression is all too familiar. ~~The situation~~ Conditions in the textile industry had been serious for a long time; ~~it was~~ some are now desperate so far as the workers were concerned. The production of clothing and other consumers' goods was halted by lack of buying power. Construction and building were at a standstill. This reached back into the brick and glass works, the steel mills and dozens of subsidiary industries, and finally to the mines and quarries.

The bituminous coal industry had been ailing ~~for a long time~~ long. It was now sick unto death; the large operators waiting upon steel and other manufactures, the small operators bankrupt, while in some sections the mines were worked out and the land unfit even for subsistence farming. In the anthracite counties few collieries were open and most of these operating but one or two days a week. Here, unemployment was due not only to the depression but to the introduction of labor saving devices which made it more profitable for the operators to conduct a few collieries

equipped with effective machinery than to employ miners. Hence, many miners would never again be needed. Everywhere, throughout the coal regions, groups of men scoured the country in battered old cars in search of non-existent jobs.

In a typical agricultural-industrial county, the principal city was formerly supported by railroad shops. Here technological unemployment had made deep inroads before the depression. Now a third of the remaining employees were laid off and the rest were on part time. The situation had reacted on the farmers in reduced sales of farm products.

Unemployment among male workers was everywhere forcing girls and women to seek employment in textile mills and clothing factories, but in these both wages and the amount of work available were declining. In one little community forty families were found to be living on the meagre earnings of young girls.

Exhaustion of Credit. The small savings of most workers' families were gone and many local grocers had become bankrupt as a result of giving credit to people they knew and could not see starve. Landlords were desperate and evictions had in some places doubled. Foreclosures on property were declining because banks and loan companies were already overloaded with real estate. A Catholic priest reported that church contributions, a sure index of economic conditions, had declined by nearly two thirds and each week grew smaller. Many families had lost all their most cherished possessions to satisfy creditors, and in some communities loan companies, charging as high as 3% per cent a month, flourished.

Decline of Living Standards. Among miners living standards had long been reduced to the barest necessities. Now in many cases these were lacking. Industrial workers, often highly skilled, who had bought homes and furnished them comfortably and attained a good standard of living,

now found themselves in actual want. Unskilled workers, whose wages had never been high, had sunk for the first time below the poverty line into dire need. Grocers stated that many people were living on beans, bread and syrup. Dairies reported a marked decline in sales. Lack of clothing resulted in children coming to school in winter in thin, ragged sweaters and without underwear.

Doubling up of families and consequent congestion was common, while people once comfortably well off were living in shacks or dilapidated hovels unfit for human beings.

Hundreds of self-respecting families of the type that forms the backbone of the Commonwealth were found existing under conditions of abject misery; property accumulated by years of self-sacrifice lost, hope dying, work skills degenerating.

Health. Red Cross and tuberculosis nurses found the conditions among school children appalling. In one school, only 10 out of 46 children were not underweight. Teachers reported that many children had been taken sick in school and it was then revealed that they were suffering from lack of food. The undernourished condition of the children in some schools was obvious to the most casual observer. The State Department of Health reported that in June, 1931, malnutrition among school children showed an increase of from 10 to 30 per cent, marked in 48 counties; slight in 18 counties.

Applications to the State Tuberculosis Clinic showed a definite increase. In Philadelphia a rise in the tuberculosis rate was apparently linked with unemployment. The State Department of Health also noted a rising trend in the spread of communicable diseases throughout the State, and an increase in the death rate. State-aided hospitals showed decreases

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in the number of pay patients and in contributions, while demands for free service were growing. Building and repair programs had had to be deferred. The problem of the ill homeless man had become very serious.

Resistance to "Charity". These workers wanted jobs not relief, and they would often go to desperate lengths before asking for help. A parish priest estimated that a third of the people in his community were without sufficient food but too proud to admit it. One family sold everything in the house but one blanket and a stove before seeking aid.

A school principal called on a supposedly well-to-do Italian to inquire why his children were out of school. He found nothing to eat in the house but a little spaghetti and the children too weak to go out. The father had refused to apply for relief because he had heard someone say that foreigners were always ready to take charity whether they needed it or not. In another case, a man whose wife was about to be confined appealed for help. He had had no work for months and they had existed on the kindness of a neighbor until the neighbor became too poor. The mother and three small children had subsisted on bread crusts and black coffee for three days, but the man broke down and sobbed because they must accept relief.

A Red Cross worker emphasized the fact that none of those applying for aid were "bums"; that they found it so terrible to ask help that she had seen strong men break down completely in the attempt, and big, strapping fellows begged her with tears to find them any kind of a job so they could avoid receiving charity.

They did not always ask for help in time. In one family, the mother was found with a baby five days old; the father, a physical wreck from undernourishment. He took cold and died shortly after. One mother died with a combination of influenza and undernourishment, leaving six children.

Private Relief. Except in the larger centers of population, there was little or no organized private relief in 1931. In the country districts school teachers, church groups, citizens committees and the unions, through such locals as survived, did what they could. In smaller cities existing agencies drew together into federations in some cases, and new agencies sprang up as in previous depressions. Their efforts included such undesirable forms of relief as soup kitchens. In some communities "made work" projects for clothing repair, street maintenance and park improvements were financed by private funds. It was during this period that "leaf-raking" first became a term of reproach. The efforts of those who strove to raise funds and to bring about a better co-ordination of relief measures were frequently hampered by the mistaken fear of business leaders and news organs that concealment of the real need would somehow help to restore "confidence."

While all these Herculean labors to relieve distress through private means did something to tide over the situation, the sums collected and disbursed were as a drop in the bucket when measured against the wage losses due to unemployment. The chairman of one civic club stated that the inability of his organization to meet the need had become a nightmare to him. Even in the largest cities, where good organization helped to make the most of every dollar, the hopeless inadequacy of private resources to cope with the situation was daily becoming more apparent.

In Philadelphia and Pittsburgh comparatively huge sums were raised by intensive drives to be disbursed by the emergency relief committees, through extending the services of established agencies. Later these private funds were supplemented by municipal appropriations, but the few millions of dollars made available vanished like dew before the sun in the face of

constantly mounting needs, although no attempt was made to pay rent and only the barest essentials were provided. When the Lloyd Committee disbanded in June, 1932, it issued a statement to the effect that only State action could provide the amounts demanded by the unemployment situation.*

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* Unemployment Relief in Philadelphia, 1930 - 1931 - 1932 (Report of the Lloyd Committee). Also Family Welfare and Relief Activities in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, 1930 - 1931, Bureau of Business Research, University of Pittsburgh.

Public Relief. The situation in the field of poor relief at this time is reminiscent of that during the depression of 1873-78, and so are the methods employed. Almshouses were crowded to overflowing, while additions and repairs were held up for lack of funds. There was such an increase in the number of children in care of poor boards that one county notified the Court that, unless conditions improved, it would be unable to comply with the law forbidding the detention of children in almshouses more than sixty days. Demands for outdoor relief had increased to such a point that no attempt was being made to give more than a small allowance for food and occasionally some fuel. While a few poor boards had greatly augmented their funds, and at least one had even increased the average grant, the great majority were trying to keep down relief costs by giving smaller grants to more people. Cases of an allowance of $8.00 per month to a family with seven or eight children were common, and some poor boards required a begging visit to the relief office for each grant.

There was practically no investigation of applications for relief, as even in counties employing investigators they were swamped with numbers. Applicants had to stand in line for hours, packed in small offices, and were frequently subjected to unnecessary humiliations. There still were directors

of the poor who expressed the belief that any man could get a job who wanted one. The hordes of transients passing through many communities served to harden this traditional attitude. It is easier to assume that John Doe, whom you do not know, is a "bum," than to condemn your neighbor, Jim Brown, who is known to be an industrious workman, for leaving home to look for a job.

The troubles of local relief officials were intensified by a rising tide of tax delinquencies and by the protests of taxpayers, many of them on the verge of dependency themselves. These difficulties were naturally most acute in those sections where the need for relief funds was greatest, such as the soft coal counties and submarginal agricultural areas. Some counties in these areas were already approaching, not only the legal limitations of taxing and borrowing power, but the actual limits of property owners' ability to pay. This extended to other services than that of poor relief. The Department of Public Instruction reported that between three and four hundred school districts would be unable to operate without supplemental aid.

In December, 1931, the State Legislature recognized the emergency by passing the "First Talbot Act," appropriating $10,000,000 for "payment to political subdivisions charged by law with the care of the poor," in other words to the poor boards. No provision was made for supervision of or proper accounting for the expenditure of this money. It did not become available until April, 1932, because it was necessary to test the constitutionality of the Talbot Act before the State Supreme Court. By this time the number of unemployed in Pennsylvania had risen to more than a million, while local resources of all kinds were drying up. This State appropriation did not last long, and not all of it went to relieve the

sufferings of the unemployed.*

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* See Poor Relief Administration in Pennsylvania, State Department of Welfare, Harrisburg, 1934. pp. 38-40.

In August, 1934, at a second special session of the Legislature, a further appropriation for unemployment relief was made and the acts were passed setting up a State Emergency Relief Board to administer the Federal funds which had in the meantime become available, as well as state funds for the relief of the unemployed. The story from this point on has been fully covered in the various annual and special reports of the State Emergency Relief Administration.**

** See bibliography

CONCLUSION

In December, 1931, a subcommittee of the Committee on Manufactures of the United States Senate held a series of notable hearings on Unemployment Relief. A number of Pennsylvanians were called to testify as to conditions prevailing in this State. Their statements played an important part in dissipating the prevalent misconceptions and prejudices regarding Federal relief to the unemployed, and helped to pave the way for the establishment of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration some months later.

From this epoch-making material we choose the following excerpts. They are part of the testimony of the late J. Prentice Murphy, who was at that time a member of the State Welfare Commission and who, as a member of the second committee appointed by the Governor to study the question of unemployment, had been chiefly responsible for the content and form of its report. Mr. Murphy said in part:

> "The use of the word 'dole' at the present time follows the American habit of grabbing a slogan. We damn very precious things with illegitimate terms. To use the epithet 'dole' as something to characterize much that is done or can be done in terms of public welfare work is very unfortunate. It is ignorant and unfair. There is not time to enter into a comparative study of the picture as to the European relief set up, but certainly if the modern state is to rest upon a firm foundation, its citizens must not be allowed to starve. Some of them do. They do not die quickly. You can starve for a long while without dying. More people are now sensitive about this thought and that is a gain, I suppose. When prosperity returns, deflation is going to hit a lot of our family relief work, yes all social work. . .
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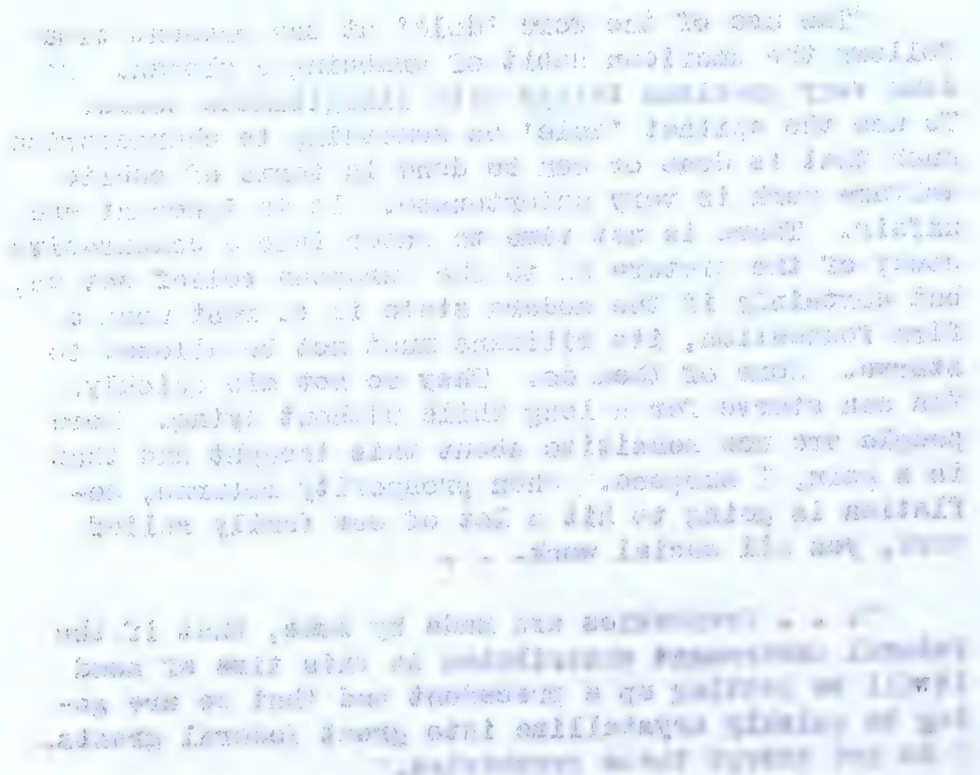
> . . . Prophecies are made by some, that if the Federal Government contributes at this time of need itwill be setting up a precedent and that we are going to quickly crystallize into great Federal grants. I do not accept these prophecies."



The speaker then followed his prophesy concerning future developments -- a prophesy already being fulfilled -- with this statesmanlike warning and plea:

> "All men need at least a few things. They need security; they need recognition; they need a creative outlet, and they need the opportunity for spiritual and cultural life, and in that you think of love and sympathy, the development of the finer part of our characters. As you look back over the early concepts of those who have thought in terms of the ideal state, whether it is in the form of government as devised in the Old Testament, the concepts of the early Christians as to earthly and heavenly happiness, Plato's republic, of the old Aristolelian philosophers, More's Utopia, St. Augustine's City of God, of Robert Owen, and the whole host of others who in modern times have dreamed dreams of Utopia; of William Penn and his concepts of what the ideal state should be, expressed not least in his beautiful prayer for Philadelphia, you find that what they all sought was the safety and development of citizens through an adequate and effective social organization. They conceived that it was the job of the State percolating throughout the whole fabric into specialized local units, to see that suffering did not go untouched or neglected. If there is wise handling of our national relief problems there is the opportunity for a great spiritual awakening in these United States."*

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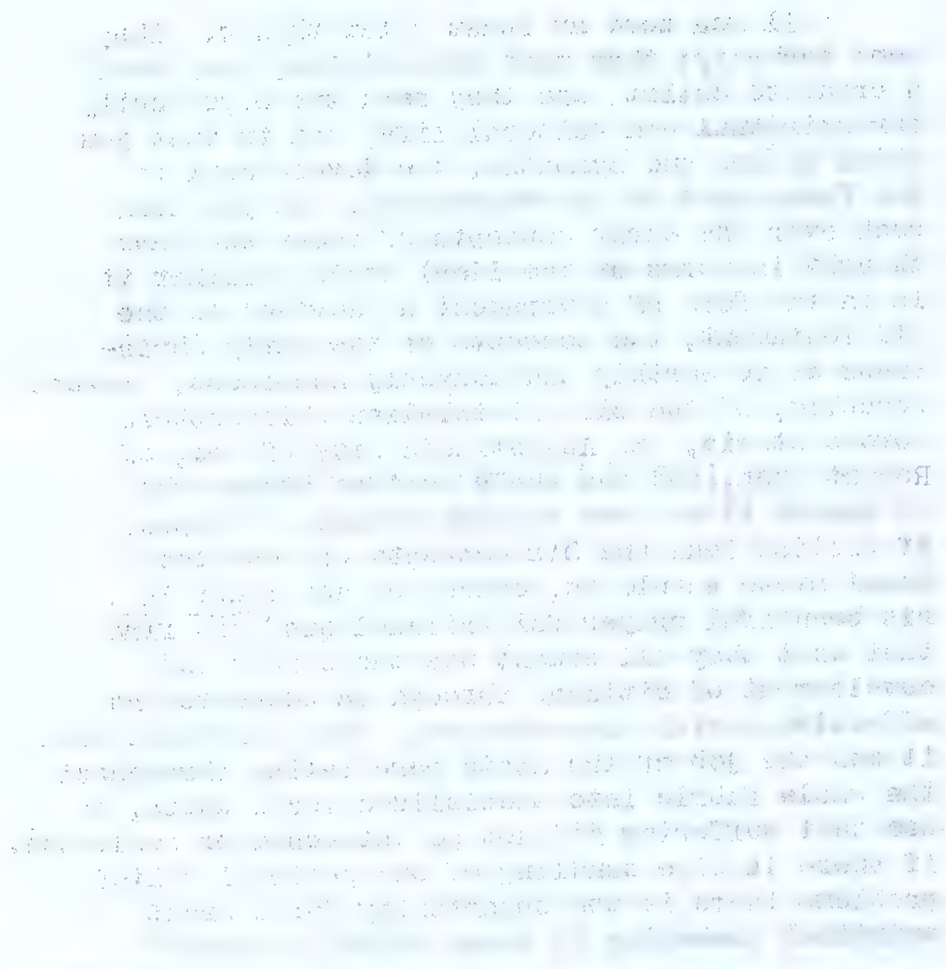
* Hearings, Senate Committee on Manufactures, Nos. 1-2, 72nd Congress, 1st Session, 1931-32. p. 55.



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